FROM OFFICE BOY TO REPORTER

HOWARD R. GARIS

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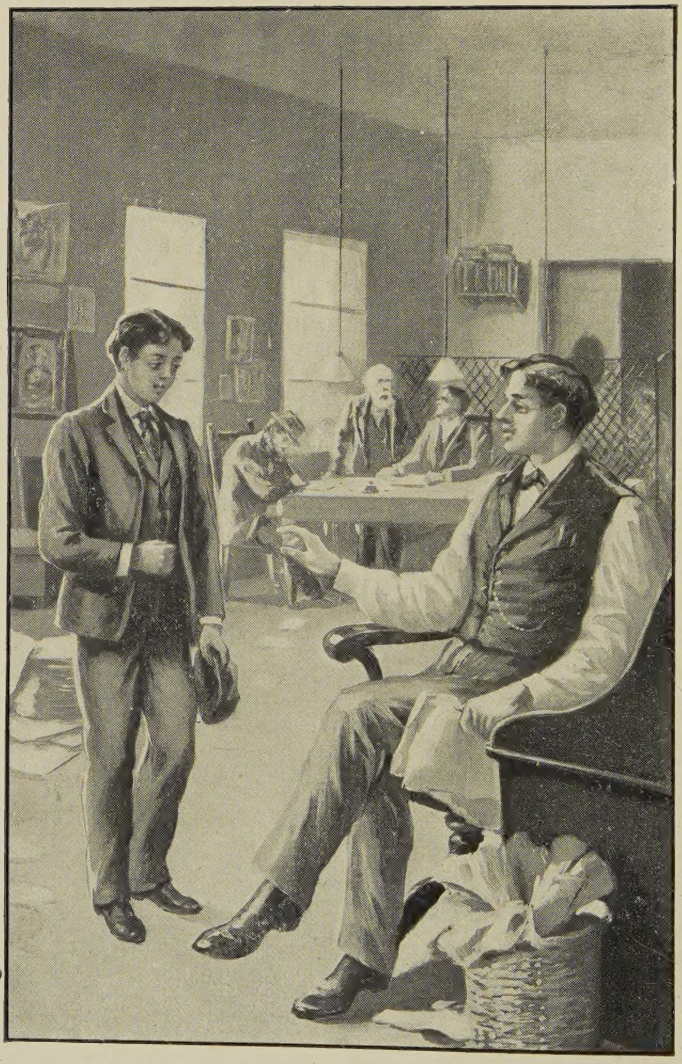

"NOW THEN, YOU NEW BOY—WHAT'S YOUR NAME?"
From Office Boy To Reporter

FROM OFFICE BOY TO REPORTER

OR

THE FIRST STEP IN JOURNALISM

BY

HOWARD R. GARIS

AUTHOR OF "THE WHITE CRYSTALS," "THE ISLE OF BLACK FIRE," "WITH FORCE AND ARMS," ETC.

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PREFACE

My Dear Boys:—

I have tried to write for you a story of newspaper life and tell how a boy, who started in the lowest position,—that of a copy carrier,—rose to become a reporter. The newspaper covers a wide field, and enters into almost every home, telling of the doings of all the world, including that which takes place right in our midst.

There are many persons in the business, which is an interesting and fascinating one. I have been actively engaged in it for nearly sixteen years, and I have seen many strange happenings. Some of these I have set down in this book for you to read, and I hope you will like them.

There are many things which I had not the time or space to tell about, and which may be related in other books of this series. There have

been written many good stories of newspaper life and experiences. I trust I may have added one that will appeal especially to you boys. If I have, I will feel amply repaid for what I have done.

Yours with best wishes,

HOWARD R. GARIS.

January 10, 1907.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	Foreclosing the Mortgage	1
II.	Bad News	9
III.	Looking for Work	18
IV.	Larry and the Reporter	26
V.	Larry Secures Work	36
VI.	Larry Makes an Enemy	46
VII.	The Missing Copy	53
VIII.	Peter is Discharged	62
IX.	Larry Gets a Story	70
X.	Larry Meets His Enemy	79
XI.	Larry Has a Fight	87
XII.	A Strange Assignment	95
XIII.	Under the River	104
XIV.	Larry's Success	113
XV.	Larry Goes to School	121
XVI.	Larry at a Strike	130
XVII.	Taken Prisoner	139
XVIII.	Held Captive	148
XIX.	Larry's Movements	156
XX.	Back at Work	165
XXI.	Larry on the Watch	173
XXII.	Trapping a Thief	181
XXIII.	Bad Money	189

CHAPTER		PAGE
XXIV.	A Queer Capture	197
XXV.	A Big Robbery	205
XXVI.	The Men in the Lot	214
XXVII.	Larry is Rewarded	222
XXVIII.	The Renowned Doctor	233
XXIX.	The Operation	241
XXX.	The Flood	249
XXXI.	Days of Terror	257
XXXII.	The Flood Increases	265
XXXIII.	Dynamiting the Dam	273
XXXIV.	Under Water	281
XXXV.	The Race	290
XXXVI.	Larry Scores a Big Beat	298
XXXVII.	Larry's Advancement	306

FROM OFFICE BOY TO REPORTER

CHAPTER I

FORECLOSING THE MORTGAGE

"Now then," began the shrill voice of the auctioneer, "we'll start these proceedin's, if ye ain't got no objections. Step right this way, everybody, an' let th' biddin' be lively!"

"Hold on a minute!" called a big man in the crowd. "We want to know what the terms are."

"I thought everybody knowed 'em," spoke Simon Rollinson, deputy sheriff, of the village of Campton, New York State. "This here farm, belongin' in fee-simple to Mrs. Elizabeth Dexter, widow of Robert Dexter, containin' in all some forty acres of tillable land, four acres of pasture an' ten of woods, is about to be sold, with all stock an' fixtures, consistin' of seven cows an' four horses, an' other things, to th' highest bidder, t' satisfy a mortgage of three thousand dollars."

"We know all that," said the big man who had first spoken. "What's the terms of payment?"

"Th' terms is," resumed Simon, "ten per cent. down, an' the balance in thirty days, an' the buyer has t' give a satisfactory bond or——"

"That'll do, go ahead," called several.

"Now then, this way, everybody," went on Mr. Rollinson. "Give me your attention. What am I bid to start this here farm, one of the finest in Onondaga County? What am I bid?"

There was a moment's silence. A murmur went through the crowd of people gathered in the farmyard in front of a big red barn. Several wanted to bid, but did not like to be the first.

As the deputy sheriff, who acted as the auctioneer, had said, the farm was about to be sold. It was a fine one, and had belonged to Robert Dexter. With his wife Elizabeth, his sons, Larry, aged fifteen, a sturdy lad with bright blue eyes and brown hair, and James, aged eight, his daughters, Lucy, a girl of twelve, afflicted with a bad disease of the spine, and little Mary, just turned four, Mr. Dexter had lived on the place, and had worked it successfully, for several years.

Then he had become ill of consumption. He could not follow the hard life. Crops failed, and in order to get cash to keep his family he was obliged to borrow a large sum of money. He gave the farm as security, and agreed, in case he could not pay the money back in a certain time, that the farm should be forfeited.

He was never able to get the funds together,

and this worry, with the ravages of the disease, soon caused his death. Mrs. Dexter, with Larry's help, made a brave effort to stand up against the misfortune, but it was of no use. She could not pay the interest on the mortgage, and, finally, the holder, Samuel Mortland, foreclosed.

The matter was placed in the hands of the sheriff, whose duty it is to foreclose mortgages, and that official, being a busy man, delegated the unpleasant task to one of his deputies or assistants, who lived in the town of Campton. The sale had been advertised for several miles surrounding the village, and on the date set quite a crowd gathered.

There were farmers from many hamlets, a number of whom brought their wives and families, as a country auction is not unlike a fair or circus as an attraction. There they were sure to meet friends and acquaintances, and, besides, they might pick up some bargains.

"Who'll make the first offer?" called Mr. Rollinson. "The upset or startin' price is fifteen hundred dollars, an' I'll jest go ahead with that. Now who'll make it two thousand?"

"I'll go seventeen hundred," called a short stout man in the front row.

"Huh! I should think ye would, Nate Jackson. Why, seventeen hundred dollars wouldn't buy th' house an' barn. You'll hev t' do better than that!"

"I'll say eighteen hundred," cried a woman who seemed to mean business.

"Now you're talkin'!" cried Mr. Rollinson. "That's sumthin' like. Why, jest think of th' pasture, an' woodland, an' cows an' horses an'——"

"I'll make it two thousand dollars," said a third bidder.

"I'm bid two thousand," cried the deputy sheriff. "Who'll make it twenty-two hundred?"

Then the auction was in full swing. The bidding became lively, though the advances were of smaller amounts than at first. By degrees the price crept up until it was twenty-nine hundred dollars.

"I've got to git at least thirty-one hundred to pay th' mortgage an' expenses," the auctioneer explained. "If I don't git more than this last bid Mr. Mortland will take the property himself. Now's your last chance, neighbors."

This seemed to stimulate the people, and several offers came in at once, until at last the bid was $3,090. There it seemed to stick, no one caring to go any higher, and each one hoping he might, by adding a few dollars more, get possession of the property, which was worth considerable above the figure offered.

While the auction was going on there sat, in the darkened parlor of the farmhouse, Mrs. Dexter and her three younger children. With them

were some sympathizing neighbors, who had called to tell her how sorry they were that she had lost the farm.

"What do you intend to do?" asked Mrs. Olney, winding her long cork-screw curls about her fingers.

"I'm sure I don't know," Mrs. Dexter said. "If we have to leave here, and I suppose we will, I think the only thing to do is to go to my sister. She lives in New York."

"Let's see, she married a Jimson, didn't she?" asked Mrs. Peterkins, another neighbor.

"No, her husband's name is Edward Ralston," replied Mrs. Dexter. "He is a conductor on a street car, in New York. My sister wrote to me to come to her if I could find no other place."

"That would be a wise thing to do," spoke Mrs. Olney. "New York is such a big place. Perhaps Larry could find some work there."

"I hope he can," said Larry's mother. "He is getting to be a strong boy, but I would rather see him in school."

"Of course, knowledge is good for the young," admitted Mrs. Peterkins, "but you'll need the money Larry can earn."

"I'm goin' to earn money when I go to New York!" exclaimed James. "I'm goin' to the end of the rainbow, where there's a pot of gold, an' I'm goin' to dig it up an' give it all to mommer."

"Good for you!" exclaimed Mrs. Olney, clasp-

ing the little fellow to her and kissing him. "You'll be a great help to your mother when you grow up."

"Kisses is for girls!" exclaimed James, struggling to free himself, whereat even his mother, who had been saddened by the thought of leaving her home, smiled.

"Will—will you have any money left after the place is sold?" asked Mrs. Peterkins.

"I hope it will bring in at least a few hundred dollars above the mortgage," answered Mrs. Dexter. "If it does not I don't know what I'll do. We would have to sell some of the house things to get money enough to travel."

Outside, the shrill voice of the auctioneer could be heard, for it was summer and the windows were open.

"Third an' last call!" cried Mr. Rollinson.

"Oh, it's going to be sold!" exclaimed Mrs. Dexter, with a sound that seemed like a sob in her throat. "The dear old farm is going."

"Third an' last call!" the deputy sheriff went on. "Last call! Last call! Going! Going! Gone!"

With a bang that sounded like the report of a rifle, Mr. Rollinson brought his hammer down on the block.

"I declare this farm sold to Jeptha Morrison fer th' sum of thirty-two hundred and seventy-five dollars," he cried. "Step this way, Mr. Mor-

rison, an' I'll take yer money an' give ye a receipt. Allers willin' t' take money,"—at which sally the crowd laughed.

"Only thirty-two hundred and seventy-five dollars," repeated Mrs. Dexter. "Why, that will leave scarcely anything for me. The sheriff's fees will have to be paid, and some back interest. I will have nothing."

She looked worried, and the two neighbors, knowing what it meant to be a widow without money and with little children to support, felt keenly for her.

"Mother!" exclaimed a voice, and a lad came into the room somewhat excitedly. "Mother, the farm's sold!"

"Yes, Larry, I heard Mr. Rollinson say so," said Mrs. Dexter.

"It wasn't fair!" the boy went on. "We should have got more for it!"

"Hush, Larry. Don't say it wasn't fair," said his mother. "You should accuse no one."

"But I heard Mr. Mortland going around and telling people not to bid on it, as the title wasn't good," the boy declared. "He wanted to scare them from bidding so he could get the property cheap."

"But he didn't buy it," said Mrs. Dexter. "It went to Mr. Morrison."

"Yes, and he bought it with the money Mr. Mortland supplied him," Larry cried. "I saw

through the whole game. It was a trick of Mr. Mortland's to get the farm, and he'll have it in a few weeks. Oh, how I wish I was a man! I'd show them something!"

"Larry, dear," said his mother reprovingly, and then the boy noticed, for the first time, that others were in the room.

"Of course I haven't any proof," Larry continued, "for I only saw Mr. Mortland hand Mr. Morrison some money and heard him tell him to make the last bid. But I have my suspicions, just the same. Why, mother, there will be nothing left for us."

"That's what I was telling Mrs. Olney and Mrs. Peterkins," said Mrs. Dexter with a sigh. "I don't know how we can get to New York, when railroad fares are so high."

"I'll tell you what we must do, mother!" exclaimed Larry.

"What, son?"

"We must sell the furniture."

"Oh, I could never do that."

"But we must," the boy went on. "We cannot take it with us to New York, and we may get money enough from it to help us out. It is the best thing to do."

CHAPTER II

BAD NEWS

"I BELIEVE Larry is right," said Mrs. Olney. "The furniture would only be a trouble to you, Mrs. Dexter. Now would be a good chance to sell it, while the crowd is here. You ought to get pretty good prices, as much of the stuff is new."

"Perhaps you are right," assented the widow, "though I hate to part with the things. Suppose you tell Mr. Rollinson, Larry."

The boy hurried from the room to inform the auctioneer there was more work for him, and Mrs. Dexter, with her two friends, came from the parlor, for they knew the place would soon be overrun by curious persons looking for bargains.

Mr. Rollinson, anxious to make more commissions, readily undertook to put the furniture up for auction. With the exception of a few articles that she prized very highly, and laying aside only the clothes of herself and children, Mrs. Dexter permitted all the contents of the house to be offered for sale.

Then, having reached this decision, she went off in a bedroom and cried softly, for she could

not bear to think of her home being broken up, and strangers using the chairs and tables which, with the other things, had made such a nice place while Mr. Dexter was alive.

Larry had hard work to keep back the tears when he saw some article of furniture, with which were associated happy memories, bid for by some farmer.

When, at length, Mr. Rollinson reached the old armchair, in which Mr. Dexter used to sit and tell his children stories, and where, during the last days of his life he had rested with his little family gathered about him, Larry could stand it no longer. He felt the hot scalding tears come to his eyes, and ran out behind the big red barn, where he sobbed out his grief all alone.

He covered his face with his hands and, as he thought of the happy days that seemed to be gone forever, his grief grew more intense. All at once he heard a voice calling:

"Hello, cry-baby!"

At first Larry was too much occupied with his troubles to pay any attention. Then someone called again:

"Larry Dexter cries like a girl!"

Larry looked up, to meet the laughing gaze of a boy about his own size and age, with bright red hair and a face much covered with freckles.

"I'm not a cry-baby!" Larry exclaimed.

"You be, too! Didn't I see you cryin'?"

"I'll make you cry on the other side of your mouth, Chot Ramsey!" Larry exclaimed, making a spring for his tormentor.

Chot doubled up his fists. To do him credit he had no idea that Larry was crying because he felt so badly at the prospect of leaving the farm that had been his home for many years. Chot was a good-hearted boy, but thoughtless. So, when he saw one of his playmates weeping, which act was considered only fit for girls, Chot could not resist the temptation to taunt Larry.

"Do you want t' fight?" demanded Chot.

"I'll punch you for calling me names!" exclaimed Larry, his sorrow at the sale of his father's armchair dispersed at the idea of being laughed at and called a cry-baby.

"You will, hey?" asked Chot. "Well, I dare you to touch me!"

"I'll make you sing a different tune in a minute!" cried Larry, rushing forward.

Then, like two game roosters, both wishing to fight, yet neither desiring to begin the battle, the boys faced each other. Their eyes were angry and all tears had disappeared from Larry's face.

"Will you knock a chip off my shoulder?" demanded Chot.

"Sure," replied Larry.

Chot stooped down, found a little piece of wood and carefully balanced it on the upper part of his arm.

"I dare you to!" he taunted.

This time-honored method of starting hostilities was not ignored by Larry. He sprang forward, and with a quick motion sent the fragment of wood flying through the air. Then he doubled up his fists, imitating the example Chot had earlier set, and stood ready for the fracas.

But at that instant, when, in another second Chot and Larry would have been involved in a rough-and-tumble encounter, James, Larry's little brother, came running around the corner of the barn. He seemed greatly excited.

"Larry! Larry!" he exclaimed. "They're sellin my nice old rockin' horse, an' my high chair what I used to have when I was a baby! Please stop 'em, Larry!"

Larry lost all desire to fight. He didn't mind if all the boys in Campton called him cry-baby. He had too many sorrows to mind that.

"Don't worry, Jimmie," he said to the little fellow. "I'll buy you some new ones."

But little James was not to be comforted, and burst into a flood of tears. Chot, who had looked on in some wonder at what it was all about, for he did not understand that the household goods were being sold, unclosed his clenched fists. Underneath a somewhat rough exterior he had a warm heart.

"Say," he began, coming up awkwardly to Larry, "I didn't know you was bein' sold out. I—

I didn't mean t' make fun of ye. I—I was only foolin' when I said ye was a cry-baby. Ye can have my best fishhook, honest ye can!"

"Thanks, Chot," replied Larry, quick to feel the change of feeling. "I couldn't help crying when I saw some of the things dad used to have going under the hammer. But I feel worse for mother and the others. I can stand it."

"Are ye goin' away from here?" asked Chot, for that anyone should leave Campton, where he had lived all his life, seemed too strange a thing to be true.

"I think we will go to New York," replied Larry. "Mother's sister lives there. I expect to get some work, and help support the folks."

"I wish I was goin' off like that!" exclaimed Chot. "They could sell everything in my house, an' everything I've got, except my dog, if they'd let me go t 'New York."

"You don't know when you're well off," spoke Larry, who, in the last few months, under the stress of trouble, had become older than his years indicated.

By this time James, who saw a big yellow butterfly darting about among the flowers which grew in an old-fashioned garden below the barn, rushed to capture it, forgetting his troubles. Larry, whose grief-stricken mood had passed, returned to the house, to find it a place of confusion.

Men and women were in almost every room, going through and looking at the different articles. The loud voice of the auctioneer rang out, and Larry felt another pang in his heart as he saw piece after piece of furniture being knocked down to the highest bidder.

The boy found his mother in the bedroom, where she had sought a quiet place to rest.

"Have you really made up your mind to go to New York, mother?" Larry asked.

"I think it is the best thing to do," was the answer. "We can stay with your aunt Ellen until I can find some work to do."

"Are you going to work, mother? I hate to think of it. I'll work for you."

"I know you will do what you can," replied Mrs. Dexter, "but I'm afraid boys do not earn much in big cities, so we will need all we both can get. It is going to be a hard struggle."

"Don't worry!" exclaimed Larry, assuming a cheerfulness he did not feel. "It will all come out right, somehow, you see if it doesn't."

"I hope so," sighed Mrs. Dexter.

The auctioneering of the goods went on rapidly, and, toward the close of the afternoon, all that were not to be kept were disposed of. Mr. Rollinson cried his last "Going! Going! Gone!" brought his hammer down for the last time with a loud bang, and then announced that the sale was over.

"Where's your mother, Larry?" he asked of the boy.

"I'll call her."

In a few minutes Larry had brought Mrs. Dexter to where the deputy sheriff waited for her in the parlor.

"Wa'al, everthing's sold," Mr. Rollinson began. "Didn't bring as much as I cal'lated on, but then ye never can git much at a forced sale."

"How much will I have left after all expenses are paid?" asked Mrs. Dexter.

"Allowin' for everything," said the auctioneer, figuring up on the back of an envelope, "you'll have jest four hundred and three dollars and forty-five cents, the odd cents bein' for some pictures."

"It is very little to begin life over again on," said Mrs. Dexter.

"But it's better than nothin'," said Mr. Rollinson, who seldom looked on the dark side of things. "Now I made the sale of these household things dependent on you. You can stay here two weeks if ye want t', an' nothin' will be taken away. Them as bought it understands it."

"I would like t' get away as soon as possible," said the widow.

"Wa'al, there's nothin' t' hinder ye."

"Then I shall start for New York day after tomorrow."

"All right, Mrs. Dexter. I'll settle up th' accounts an' have all th' money ready by then."

Mr. Rollinson was as good as his word. On the third day after the sale, having written to her sister that she was coming, but not waiting for a reply, Mrs. Dexter, with Larry, Lucy, Mary and James, boarded a train for the big city where they were all hoping their fortunes awaited them. Little James was full of excitement. He was sure they were going at last to the end of the rainbow. Mary was delighted with the new and strange sights along the way. Larry was very thoughtful. As for Lucy her spine hurt her so that she got very little enjoyment from the trip. But she did not say anything about it, for fear of worrying her mother.

It was a long journey, but it came to an end at last. The train reached Hoboken, on the New Jersey side of the Hudson River, and, though somewhat bewildered by the lights, the noise and confusion, Larry managed to learn which ferry-boat to take to land them nearest to his aunt's house, who lived on what is called the "East Side" of New York.

The trip across the river on the big boat was a source of much delight to the younger children, but Mrs. Dexter was too worried to be interested. Lucy was very tired, but Larry kept up his spirits.

Once landed in New York, in the evening, the confusion, the noise, the shouts of the cabmen, the rattle of the cars, the clanging of gongs and the ringing of bells, was so great that poor Mrs. Dex-

ter, who had been so long used to the quiet of the country, felt her head ache.

By dint of many inquiries Larry found out which car to take and, marshaling his mother and the children ahead of him, he directed them where to go. A long ride brought them to the street where Mrs. Ralston lived.

Here was more confusion. The thoroughfare swarmed with children, and the noise was almost as great as down at the ferry. A man directed the travelers to the house, which was an apartment or tenement one, inhabited by a number of families. Larry, his mother, and the children climbed the stairs to the third floor, where Mrs. Ralston lived. A knock on the door brought a woman who was surprised at her visitors.

"Does Mrs. Ralston live here?" asked Larry, thinking he might have made a mistake.

"She did, but she moved away yesterday," was the answer.

"Moved away?"

"Yes, didn't you hear? Her husband was killed in a street-car accident a few days ago, and after the funeral Mrs. Ralston said she could not afford to keep these rooms. So she moved away. I came in last night. Are you relatives of hers?"

"I am her sister," said Mrs. Dexter, and then, at the news of Mr. Ralston's death, coming on top of all the other troubles, the poor woman burst into tears.

CHAPTER III

LOOKING FOR WORK

"Now there, don't you worry one mite," said the woman who had come to the door. "I know jest how you feel. Come right in. We haven't much room, but there's only my husband, and he can sleep on the floor to-night. I'll take care of you until you can find some place to stay. Bring the children in. Well, if there isn't a little fellow who's jest the image of my little Eddie that died," and the good woman clasped James in her arms and hugged him tightly.

"I'm afraid we'll be too much trouble for you," spoke Larry, seeing that his mother was too overcome to talk.

"Not a bit of it," was the hearty reply. "Come right along. I was jest gittin' supper, an' there's plenty for all of you. Come in!"

Confused and alarmed at the sudden news, and hardly knowing what she did, Mrs. Dexter entered the rooms where she had expected to find her sister. She was almost stunned by the many troubles coming all at once, and was glad enough to find any sort of temporary shelter.

"I'm Mrs. Jackson," the woman went on. "We're a little upset, but I know you won't mind that."

"No indeed," replied Mrs. Dexter. "We are only too glad to come in."

The apartment, which consisted of four small rooms, was in considerable confusion. Chairs and tables stood in all sorts of positions, and there were two beds up.

"We'll manage somehow," said Mrs. Jackson. "My goodness! The potatoes are burning!" and she ran to the kitchen, where supper was cooking.

While she was busy over the meal her husband came in, and, though he was much surprised to see so many strangers in the house, he quickly welcomed them when his wife explained the circumstances. Supper was soon ready, and the travelers, except Mrs. Dexter, ate with good appetites. Then, after she had told something of her troubles it was decided that the two younger children should sleep in a bed with their mother. Lucy shared Mrs. Jackson's room, and Larry and Mr. Jackson had beds made up on the floor in the parlor.

"We'll pretend we're camping out," said Mr. Jackson. "Did you ever camp, Larry?"

"Sometimes, with the boys in Campton," was the reply. "But we never stayed out all night."

"I have when I was a young man," said Mr. Jackson. "I used to be quite fond of hunting."

Larry was tired enough to fall off to sleep at once, but, for a time, the many unusual noises bothered him. There was an elevated railroad not far off, and the whistle of the trains, the buzz and hum of the motors, kept him awake. Then, too, the streets were full of excitement, boys shouting and men calling, for it was a warm night, and many stayed out until late.

At length, however, the country boy fell asleep, and dreamed that he was engineer on a ferryboat which collided with an elevated train, and the whole affair smashed into a balloon and came shooting earthward, landing with a thump, which so startled Larry that he awoke with a spring that would have rolled him out of bed had he not been sleeping on the floor.

It was just getting daylight, and Larry at first could not recall where he was. Then he sat up, and his movement awakened Mr. Jackson.

"Is it time to get up?" asked the latter.

"I—I don't know," said Larry.

Mr. Jackson reached under his pillow, drew out his watch, and looked at the time.

"Guess I'd better be stirring if I want to get to work to-day," he remarked. Then he began to dress and Larry did likewise. Mrs. Jackson was already up, and breakfast was soon served.

"Make yourselves at home," was Mr. Jackson's remark, as he left the house to go to the office where he was employed.

Mrs. Dexter insisted on helping Mrs. Jackson with the housework, and, while the two women were engaged Mary and James went down to the street to see what, to them, were many wonderful sights. Lucy, whose spine hurt her very much because of the long journey, remained in bed, and Larry made himself useful by going to the store for Mrs. Jackson, after receiving many cautions from his mother not to get lost in New York.

Mrs. Dexter was worrying over what she should do. She wanted to find her sister, but she realized that if Mr. Ralston was dead his widow would not be in a position to give even temporary shelter to Mrs. Dexter and her family. She knew her sister must have written to her, but the letter had probably reached Campton after Mrs. Dexter had left.

"Why don't you take a few rooms in this house?" suggested Mrs. Jackson. "There are some to be had cheap on the floor above, and it's a respectable place. Then you will have time to hunt up your sister. Maybe the janitor knows where she moved to."

"I believe I will do that," said the widow. She knew what little money she had would not last long and she wanted to make a home for her children where they could stay while she went out to work.

When Larry returned Mrs. Dexter talked the matter over with him, for she had come to depend

on her son very much of late. The matter was decided by their engaging four rooms on the floor above. They were unfurnished except for an attractive gas range on which cooking could be done.

"I'm afraid I wouldn't know how to work it," said Mrs. Dexter.

"I know," said Larry. "Mrs. Jackson showed me this morning."

From a secondhand store some beds, a table, and a few chairs were purchased, and thus, on a very modest scale, compared with their former home, the Dexters began housekeeping in New York.

They ate supper in their new rooms that night. The younger children were delighted, but Mrs. Dexter could not but feel that it was a poor home compared to the one she had been compelled to leave. Larry saw what was troubling his mother.

"Don't worry," he said. "I'll soon be working and we will have a better place."

"I wish I was strong enough to work," said Lucy in a low tone, her eyes filling with tears as she thought of her helplessness.

"Don't you wish anything of the kind!" exclaimed Larry. "I'm going to work for all of us."

He made up his mind to start out the first thing in the morning and hunt for a job. He carried this plan out. After a simple breakfast which

was added to by some nice potatoes and meat which Mrs. Jackson sent up, Larry hurried off.

"Be very careful," cautioned his mother. "Don't let anyone steal your pocketbook."

Larry thought a thief would not make a very good haul, as he only had twenty-five cents in it, but he did not say so to his mother.

The boy did not know where to start to look for work. He had had no experience except on a farm, and there is not much call for that sort of labor in the city. Still he was strong, quick, and willing, and, though he didn't know it, those qualities go a great way in any kind of work.

Larry started out from the apartment house, and walked slowly. He had the address of his new home written down, in case he got lost, but he determined to walk slowly, note the direction of the streets, and so acquaint himself with the "lay-out" of the big city.

He had two plans in mind. One was to go along the streets looking for a sign "Boy Wanted." The other was to look at the advertisements in the newspapers. He resolved to try both.

Purchasing one of the big New York daily newspapers, which bore on the front page the name *The Leader*, Larry turned to the page where the dealer who sold it to him had said he would find plenty of want advertisements. There were a number of boys wanted, from those to run errands

to the variety who were expected to begin in a wholesale house at a small salary and work their way up. In nearly every one were the words "experience necessary."

Now Larry had had no experience, and he felt that it would he useless to try the places where that qualification was required. He marked several of the advertisements that he thought might provide an opening for him, and asked the first policeman he met how to get to the different addresses.

The bluecoat was a friendly one, who had boys of his own at home, and he kindly explained to Larry just how to get to the big wholesale and retail places that needed lads.

But luck seemed to be against Larry that day. At every place he went he was told that he was just too late.

"You'll have to get up earlier in the morning if you want to get a job," said one man where he inquired. "There were ten boys here before breakfast after this place. This is a city where you can't go to sleep for very long."

Larry was beginning to think so. He had tried a number of places that advertised, without success, when he saw a sign hanging out in front of a shoe store. It informed those who cared to know that a boy was needed.

Larry made an application. Timidly he asked the proprietor of the store for work.

"I hired a boy this morning about seven o'clock," was the reply.

"Your sign is out yet," spoke Larry.

"I forgot to bring it in," said the man.

He did not seem to think it minded that he had caused disappointment to one lad, and might to others. Larry walked from the place much discouraged.

CHAPTER IV

LARRY AND THE REPORTER

It was now noon, and Larry, who had a healthy boy's appetite, began to feel hungry. He had never eaten in one of the big city restaurants, and he felt somewhat timid about going in. Besides, he had only a quarter, and he thought that he could get very little for that. He also felt that he had better save some of the money for car-fare, and so he made up his mind that fifteen cents was all he could afford for dinner.

He walked down several streets before he saw a restaurant that seemed quiet enough for him to venture in.

The place was kept by an old German, and while it was neat and clean did not seem to be very prosperous, as Larry was the only customer at that particular hour.

"Vat you want, boy?" asked the old man, as Larry entered. "I don't have noddings to gif away to beggars. I ain't buying noddings. You had better git out."

"I'm not selling anything and I'm not a beggar," said Larry sharply. "I came in here to

buy a meal,—er—that is a small one," he added as he thought of his limited finances.

"Ach! a meal, eh!" exclaimed the German, smiling instead of frowning. "Dot's different alretty yet! Sid down! I have fine meals!"

"I guess I only want something plain," spoke Larry. "A cup of coffee and some bread and butter."

"We gif a plate of soup, a piece of meat, coffee und rolls yet by a meal," said the restaurant keeper, and Larry wondered how much such a meal would cost. "It's fifteen cents alretty," the German went on, and Larry breathed a sigh of relief, for he was very hungry.

He had gone, by chance, into one of the cheap though good restaurants of New York, where a few cents buys plenty of food, though it is not served with as much style as in more expensive places.

The restaurant keeper motioned Larry to sit down at one of the oilcloth-covered tables, and then, having brought a glass of water, hurried away. Soon his voice was heard giving orders, and in a little while he came back, bringing a bowl of hot soup. Larry thought he had never tasted anything so fine.

By this time several other persons had come into the place and the German was kept busy filling orders. A young woman came out from the rear of the shop to help him and she served Larry

with the rest of his meal. When he had finished he was given a red square of pasteboard, with the figures "15" on it, and he guessed that this was his meal check and that he was to pay at the desk, over which a fat woman presided. It was near the door, and walking up to it Larry laid down his quarter, getting his ten cents in change and going out.

He felt that he was getting on in the world, since he had eaten all by himself in a public restaurant, and he was encouraged now to go on with his search for work. A meal often puts a strong heart into a man, or boy either, for that matter.

"Now for a job!" exclaimed Larry as he started off briskly.

He consulted the paper which he still had and went to several places that had advertised. But that day must have brought forth an astonishing crop of boys out of work, or else all places were quickly filled, for at every establishment where Larry called he was told that there was no need for his services.

Signs of "Boy Wanted" became "as scarce as hen's teeth," Larry said afterward, which are very scarce indeed, as no one ever saw a hen with teeth. About four o'clock in the afternoon he found himself at the junction of Fifth Avenue and Broadway, where the big Flatiron Building, as it is called, stands. Larry had walked several miles and he was tired and discouraged.

The day, which had been pleasant when Larry started out, had become cloudy, and a dark bank of clouds rolling up in the west indicated that a thunderstorm was about to break. As Larry stood there, amid all the bustle and excitement of the biggest city in the United States, he felt so lonely and worried that he did not know what to do. He thought of his mother and the children at home, and wondered whether he would ever get work so that he could take care of them.

Suddenly, from out of the western sky, there came a dazzling flash of lightning. It was followed by a crashing peal of thunder, and then the storm, which had been gathering for some time, burst. There was a deluge of rain, and people began running for shelter.

Larry looked about, and, seeing that many were making for the open doorway of the Flatiron Building, on the Fifth Avenue side, ran in that direction. He had hardly reached the friendly shelter when there came a crash that sounded like the discharge of a thirteen-inch gun, and a shock that seemed to make the very ground tremble.

At the same time Larry felt a queer tingling in the ends of his fingers, and several persons near him jumped.

"That struck near here!" a man at his side exclaimed.

"Guess you're right," another man said. "Lucky we're in out of the wet."

By this time the rain was coming down in torrents, and several more persons crowded into the lobby of the big building. Larry stayed near the door, for he liked to watch the storm and was not afraid.

Suddenly, down the street, there sounded a shrill whistle, mingled with a rumbling and a clang of bells.

"It's a fire!" cried several.

"Lightning struck!" exclaimed one or two.

"It was that last smash!" said the man Larry had noticed first. "I thought it did some damage. Here come the engines!"

Up Fifth Avenue dashed the steamers, hose carts, and hook-and-ladder wagons.

"There's the fire! In that building across the street!" someone said.

Larry looked and saw, coming out of the top story of a big piano warehouse on the opposite side of Fifth Avenue, a volume of black smoke. A number of men, unmindful of the rain, ran out to see the firemen work, and after a little hesitation Larry, who did not mind a wetting, followed.

It was the first time he had ever seen a fire in a big city, and he did not want to miss it. He worked his way through the crowds that quickly gathered until he was almost in front. There he held his place, not minding the rain, which was still falling hard, though not as plentifully as at first.

He saw the firemen run out long lengths of hose, attach them to the steamers, which had already started to pump, and watched the ladder men run out the long runged affairs up which they swarmed to carry the hose to the top stories, where the lightning had started the fire.

Then the water tower was brought into play. Under the power of compressed air the long slender pole of latticed ironwork rose high, carrying several lengths of hose with it. Then the nozzle was pointed toward the top windows, and soon a powerful stream of water was being sent in on the flames, that were making great headway among wood and shavings in the piano place.

The street was filled with excited men who were running back and forth. Many of them were persons who had come from near-by buildings to see the fire. Some were from the burning building, trying to save their possessions. The firemen themselves were the coolest of the lot, and went about their tasks as if there was nothing unusual the matter. Soon the police patrol dashed up and the blue-coats piled out and began to establish fire lines. Larry, like many others, was forced to get back from the middle of the street.

The boy, however, managed to keep his position in the front rank. He watched with eager eyes the firemen at work, and never thought how wet he was.

"It's going to be a bad blaze," remarked a man near Larry. "The fire department's going to have its hands full this time."

It certainly seemed so, for flames were spouting from all the windows on the top story and the one below it. More engines dashed up, and the excitement, noise, and confusion grew.

In front of Larry a big policeman was standing, placed there by the sergeant in charge of the reserves to maintain the fire lines. The officer had his back toward the crowd, and enjoyed a good vantage point from which to watch the flames. A young fellow, with his coat collar and trousers turned up, and carrying an umbrella, worked his way through the crowd until he was beside Larry.

"Let me pass, please," he said, and then, slipping under the rope which the police had stretched, he was about to pass the policeman and get closer to the fire.

"Here, come back, you!" the officer exclaimed.

"It's all right; I'm a reporter from the *Leader*," said the young fellow, and he turned, showing a big shining metal star on his coat.

"Go ahead," spoke the policeman. "You'll have a good story, I'm thinking."

"Anybody hurt?" asked the reporter, pausing to ask the first question that a newspaper man puts when he gets to a fire.

"Wouldn't wonder. Saw the Roosevelt Hos-

pital ambulance taking a man away when we came up. Jumped from the roof, I heard."

"Gee! I'll have to get busy! Say, it ain't doin' a thing but rain, is it? I can't take notes and hold my umbrella too, and I certainly hate to get wet. I wish I had a kid to manage the thing for me."

"I'll hold the umbrella for you," volunteered Larry, quick to take advantage of the situation, and realizing that, by aiding the reporter, who seemed to be a sort of favored person at fires, he might see more of the blaze.

"All right, kid, come along," spoke the newspaper man, and, at a nod from the policeman to show it was all right, Larry slipped under the rope and followed the reporter, who made off on a run toward the burning building. Many men wished they were in Larry's place.

"Come on, youngster. What's your name?" asked the reporter of Larry.

The boy told him.

"Mine's Harvey Newton," volunteered the newspaper man. "We'll have to look lively. Here, you hold the umbrella over me, while I make a few notes."

Larry did so, screening the paper which the reporter drew from his pocket as much as possible from the rain. Mr. Newton, who, as Larry looked at him more closely, appeared much older than he had at first, made what looked like the

tracks of a hen, but which were in reality a few notes setting down the number of the building, the height, the size, the location of the fire. Then the reporter jotted down the number of engines present, a few facts about the crowd, the way the police were handling it, and something of how the firemen were fighting the blaze.

"This is better than getting wet through," Mr. Newton said, as he returned his paper to his pocket and waited for new developments.

"Say, why don't you bring the city editor out with you when you cover fires?" asked another reporter, from a different paper, addressing Mr. Newton, and noticing Larry's occupation.

"I would if he'd come," replied Mr. Newton. "Don't you wish you had an umbrella and a rain-shield bearer?"

"Don't know but what I do," rejoined the other, who was soaking wet. "Say, this is a corker, ain't it? Got much?"

"Not yet. Just arrived."

Suddenly, with a report like that of a dynamite blast, the whole top of the building seemed to rise in the air. An explosion of oils and varnishes used on pianos had occurred. For an instant there was deep silence succeeding the report. Then came cries of fear and pain, mingled with the shouts of men in the fiercely burning structure.

"I'll need help on this story!" exclaimed Mr.

Newton. "I wonder—— Say, Larry," he went on, turning to the boy, "can you use a telephone?"

"Yes," replied Larry, who had used one several times at Campton.

"Then call up the *Leader* office. The number's seventeen hundred and eighty-four. Ask for the city editor, and tell him Newton said to send down a couple of men to help cover the fire. Run as if you were in a race!"

CHAPTER V

LARRY SECURES WORK

LARRY handed over the umbrella and darted toward the sidewalk. He wiggled his way through the crowd, and went back to the lobby of the Flatiron Building, where he had noticed a telephone booth. Dashing inside he took off the receiver, and gave central the number of the *Leader* office. Then the girl in the exchange, after making the connection, told him to drop ten cents in the slot, for the telephone was of the automatic kind. In a few seconds Larry, in a somewhat breathless voice, was talking with the city editor of one of New York's biggest newspapers.

"What's that?" Larry heard the voice at the other end of the wire ask. "Newton told you to call me up? Who are you? Larry Dexter, eh? Well, what is it? Big fire, eh? Explosion? Fifth Avenue and Broadway? All right. I'll attend to it."

Then, before the city editor hung up the receiver of his instrument Larry heard him call in sharp tones:

"Smith, Robinson! Quick! Jump up to that

fire and help Newton. Telephone the stuff in! We'll get out an extra if it's worth it!"

Then came a click that told that the connection was cut off, and Larry knew that help for his friend, the reporter, was on the way.

The boy hurried from the booth and ran again toward the crowd that was watching the fire. There were more people than ever now on the scene, but Larry managed to make his way through them to where the same policeman stood that had let himself and the reporter through the lines once before. Larry resolved to find his new friend. He slid close up to the officer.

"I'm helping Mr. Newton, the reporter for the *Leader*," the boy said to the bluecoat.

The policeman looked down, recognized Larry, and said:

"All right, youngster, go ahead. Only get a fire badge next time or I'll have to shut you out."

But Larry was not worrying about the next time. He was rejoicing that he had gained admittance through the lines, and was close to the fire, which was now burning furiously.

More engines arrived with the sending in of the third alarm, and several ambulances were on the scene, as a number of men had been hurt in the explosion. Within the space made by the ropes there was plenty of room to move about, but there was much confusion. Larry spied Mr. Newton as close to the blaze as the reporter could get.

Then he saw him dart over to an ambulance to which they had carried a wounded man.

Larry ran after his new friend, and found him getting the name of the injured piano worker, who was badly burned. The poor fellow was being swathed in cotton and oil by the ambulance surgeon, but the reporter did not seem to think of this. He asked the man for his name and address, got them, and jotted them down on his paper, which was now quite wet, since he had furled the umbrella.

"Back on the job, eh?" questioned Mr. Newton, stopping a moment in his rush to notice Larry. "Did Mr. Emberg say he'd send me some help?"

"Mr. Emberg?" asked Larry.

"Yes. The city editor you telephoned to?"

"Oh yes, I heard him tell someone to 'jump out on the fire.'"

"Then they'll come. Now, youngster, let's see —what's your name? Oh yes,—Larry. Well, I'm going to have my hands full now. Never mind about holding the umbrella. But drop in the *Leader* office and see me some day, say about five o'clock in the afternoon, after we go to press."

"All right," said Larry, dimly wondering how he was to get home, since he had spent his last ten cents for the telephone. But Mr. Newton was thoughtful to remember that item, and taking a quarter from his pocket he handed it to Larry.

"That's for the message and your trouble," he said.

Larry was glad enough to take it, though he would have been satisfied with ten cents.

"Don't forget to call and see me!" said Mr. Newton.

The next instant there came loud cries of warning, and looking up Larry saw the whole upper front of the building toppling outward, and ready to fall over.

"Back! Back for your lives!" cried police and firemen in a shrill chorus.

Larry turned and ran, as did scores of others who were in the path of the crumbling masonry. A moment later the crash came. Then followed a rush of the frightened crowd, in which Larry was borne from his feet and carried along, until he found himself two blocks from the fire.

He turned to make his way back to within the fire lines, but found it too hard a task, as the crowd was now enormous. Then he decided to give it up as a bad job, and go home. Inquiry of a policeman showed him which car to take, and an hour later he was in the small apartment, where he was met by his mother and the children, who were much alarmed over his absence.

"No luck, mother," Larry said, in answer to a look from Mrs. Dexter. "But I earned fifteen cents, anyhow, by helping at a fire."

"Helping at a fire?"

Then Larry told his experience to the no small wonderment of them all.

"Maybe Mr. Newton will help me get a job," he said hopefully.

"I wish he would," said Mrs. Dexter. "I have some work to do, Larry," she added.

"You, mother?"

"Yes, a lady on the floor above does sewing for a factory. It happened that one of the women who works in the place is sick, and our neighbor thought of me. I went to the shop, and I got something to do."

"But I don't like to have you work in a shop, mother," objected Larry.

"I am to do the sewing at home," went on Mrs. Dexter. "I cannot earn much, but it is better than nothing, and it may improve in time."

"Maybe I can get a job diggin' gold somewhere," put in James. "If I do I'll give you a million dollars, mommer."

"I'm sure you will," said his mother, giving him a hug.

"Maybe I could sew some," spoke Lucy, from the chair where she was sitting, propped up in cushions.

"I'd like to see us let you!" exclaimed Larry. "You just wait, I'll get a job somehow!"

But, though he spoke boldly, the boy was not so certain of his success. He was in a big city, where thousands are seeking work every hour,

and where opportunities to labor do not go long unappropriated. But Larry was hopeful, and, though he worried somewhat over the prospect of the little family coming to grief in New York, he had not given up yet, by any means, for this was not his way.

Late that night Larry went out and bought a copy of the *Leader*. On the front page, set off by big headlines, was the story of the fire and explosion. The boy felt something of a part ownership in the account, and was proud to think he had helped, in some small measure, to provide such a thrilling tale.

For the fire proved a disastrous one, in which three men were killed and a number seriously hurt. The papers, for two days thereafter, had more stories about the blaze, and there was some talk of an investigation to see who was responsible for having so much oil and varnish stored in the place, which, it was decided by all, was the cause of the worst features of the accident.

During those two days Larry made a vain search for work. But there never seemed to be such a small number of positions and so many boys to fill them.

The third day, after a fruitless tramp about the city, Larry found himself down on Park Row, near the Post Office. He looked at one of the many tall buildings in that locality, and there star-

ing him in the face, from the tenth story of one, were the words:

New York Leader.

"That's my paper," Larry thought with a sense of pride. Then the idea came to him to go up and see Mr. Newton, the reporter. It was nearly five o'clock, and this was the hour Mr. Newton had mentioned. Larry did not exactly know why he was going in to see the reporter. He had some dim notion of asking if there was not some work he might get to do.

At any rate, he reasoned, it would do no harm to try. Accordingly he entered the elevator, and asked the attendant on what floor the reporters of the *Leader* might be found.

"Twelfth," was the reply, and then, before Larry could get his breath, he was shot upward, and the man called out:

"Twelfth floor. This express makes no stop until the twenty-first now."

Larry managed to get out, somewhat dizzy by the rapid flight.

Before him the boy saw a door, marked in gilt letters:

City Room.

"I wonder where the country room is," mused Larry. "I guess I'd feel more at home in a country room than I would in a city one."

Then the door opened and several young men came out.

"Did you get any good stories to-day?" asked one.

"Pretty fair suicide?" was the answer. "How'd you make out?"

"Pretty decent murder, but they cleared it up too soon. No mystery in it."

Rightly guessing that they were reporters, Larry approached them and asked for Mr. Newton. He was directed to walk into the city room, and there he saw his friend, with his feet perched upon a desk, smoking a pipe.

"Hello, youngster!" greeted Mr. Newton. "Been to any more fires?"

"No," said Larry with a smile. "That one was enough."

"I should say so. Well, you helped me considerable on that. We beat the other papers."

"Beat them?" asked Larry.

"Yes, got out quicker, and had a heap better story, if I do say it myself. You helped some. Want to go down and see the presses run?"

"I came in to see if there was any chance of getting work," answered Larry, determined to plunge at once into the matter that most interested him. "My mother and I and the rest of the family came to New York a few days ago, and I need work. Is there any chance at all of a job here?"

"Well, if that isn't luck?" exclaimed Mr. Newton, without any apparent reference to Larry's question. "Say," he called to someone in the next room, "weren't you asking me if I knew of someone who wanted to run copy, Mr. Emberg?" he asked.

"Yes," replied the city editor, coming out into the reporter's room. "Why?"

"Nothing, only here's a friend of mine who wants the job, that's all," said Mr. Newton, as if such coincidences happened every day.

"Ever run copy?" asked the city editor, after a pause.

"I—I don't know," replied Larry, wondering what sort of work it was.

"It's like being an office boy in any other establishment," said Mr. Newton. "You carry the stuff from the reporters' desks to the editors' and copy readers', and you carry it from them,—that is, what's left of it—to the tube that shoots it to the composing room."

"I guess I could do it, I'm pretty strong," replied Larry, whereat the two men laughed, though Larry could not see why.

"You'll do," said the city editor pleasantly. "I'll give you a trial, anyhow. When can you come in?"

"Right now!" exclaimed Larry, hardly believing the good news was true.

"To-morrow will do," said the editor with a

smile. "We're all through for to-day. Come in at eight o'clock to-morrow morning."

"I will!" almost gasped Larry, and then, as the two men nodded a kind good-night, he sped from the room.

CHAPTER VI

LARRY MAKES AN ENEMY

LARRY thought he would never get home that evening to tell the good news. He fairly burst into the room where his mother was sewing and cried out:

"Hurrah, mother! I've got a job!"

"Good, Larry!" exclaimed Mrs. Dexter. "I'm so glad. What is it?"

Talking so rapidly he could hardly be understood, Larry narrated all that had occurred on his visit to the newspaper office.

"I'm to go to work to-morrow morning," he finished.

"Will they give you a thousand dollars, Larry?" asked little James, coming up to his brother.

"I'm afraid not, Jimmy. I really forgot to ask how much they pay, but it will be something for a start, anyhow."

"Maybe they'll let you write stories for the paper," went on James, who was a great reader of fairy tales.

"Oh, wouldn't that be fine!" spoke Lucy.

"They don't have many stories in newspapers," said Larry, who had begun to consider himself somewhat of an authority in the matter. "At least they call the things they print stories, for I heard Mr. Newton say he had a good story of the fire, but they're not what we call stories. I wish I could get to writing, though; but I'm afraid I don't know enough."

"Why don't you study nights?" suggested Lucy. "I'll help you."

"I believe I will," replied Larry, for his sister had been very bright in her studies before the spinal trouble took her from school. "But first I want to see what sort of work I have to do. My, but I'm hungry!"

"We were waiting with supper for you," said Larry's mother. "I'll get it right away."

Then, while Mrs. Dexter set the table and started to serve the meal, Larry took little Mary on his knee and told her over again the story of the big fire he had seen, a tale which James also listened to with great delight. The little boy declared it was better than the best fairy story he had ever read.

Half an hour before the appointed time next morning Larry was at the office of the *Leader*. Neither the city editor, the copy readers, nor any of the reporters were on hand yet, but there were two boys in the room. At first they paid no attention to Larry, but stood in one corner, con-

versing. One of the boys, a rather thin chap, with a face that seemed older than it should have on a boy of his size, took out a cigarette and lighted it.

"If Mr. Emberg catches you, Peter, you'll get fired," cautioned the other fellow, who had a shock of light hair, blue eyes, and seemed a good-natured sort of chap.

"A heap I care for Emberg," was Peter Manton's reply. "I can get another job easy. The *Rocket* needs a good copy boy. Besides Emberg won't be here for an hour," and he began to puff on his cigarette.

Larry advanced further into the room, and, at the sound of his steps, the other boys turned quickly. Peter was the first to speak.

"Hello, kid," he said rather familiarly, considering Larry was as old and about as large as himself. "What do you want?"

"I'm waiting for Mr. Emberg," replied Larry.

"Lookin' for a job?" sneered Peter. "If you are you can fade away. We got all the help we need. What right you got buttin' in?"

"Mr. Emberg told me to come here and see him," said Larry quietly, and then he sat down in a chair.

"Look a-here," began Peter, crossing the room quickly and coming close to Larry, "if you think you can come in here and git a job over my head you're goin' to get left. Do you hear?"

Larry thought it best not to answer.

"I've a good mind to punch your face," went on Peter, doubling up his fist. He seemed half inclined to put his threat into execution when the door suddenly opened and Mr. Newton walked into the city room.

"Hello, Larry!" he exclaimed cordially. "You're on time, I see."

"Yes, sir," replied the new copy boy.

At the sight of the reporter Peter had dropped his cigarette to the floor and stepped on it. At the same time he slunk away from Larry, though the look in Peter's face was not pleasant.

"Who's been smoking cigarettes?" asked Mr. Newton, sniffing the air suspiciously. "Don't you boys know the orders?"

While it was permitted for the men in the room to smoke there were stringent rules against the boys indulging in the habit.

"There was a feller come in to see the editor," replied Peter. "He was smokin' real hard. But he didn't stay long. I guess that's what you smell."

Mr. Newton gave a quick look at Peter, and then at the still smouldering cigarette end on the floor. However, if he had any suspicions he did not mention them.

Several other reporters came in now, and there was much laughter and joking among them. Some had work to do on the stories they had been

out on the night before, and soon half a dozen typewriters were clicking merrily.

Mr. Emberg arrived about half-past eight o'clock and began sending the men out on their different duties, or assignments as they are called in a newspaper office. He greeted Larry with a smile and told him to wait until the morning's rush was over, when the lad would be told what his work was.

Larry was much interested in watching and listening to all that went on. He heard the men talking about fires, robberies, suicides, and political matters. The place seemed like a hive full of busy bees with men and boys constantly coming and going. Larry felt a thrill of excitement when he realized that he was soon to have a part in this.

In about half an hour, when most of the men had gone out to various places, some to hospitals, some to police stations, some to the courts, and some to fire headquarters, the room was comparatively quiet.

"Now then, you new boy—what's your name?" began Mr. Emberg, motioning to Larry. "Oh yes, I remember it now, it's Harry."

"No, sir, it's Larry," corrected the new boy.

"Oh yes, Larry. Well, I'll tell you what you are to do."

Thereupon the city editor instructed Larry how, whenever he heard "Copy!" called, to hurry

to the desk, get the sheets of paper on which the articles for the paper were written, and carry them to a room down the hall. There he was to put them in a sort of brass tube, or carrier, drop the carrier into a pipe, and pull a lever, which sent compressed air into the pipe and shot the tube of copy to the composing room. There it would be taken out and set up into type. But Larry's duities, for the time, ended when he had put the copy in the tube.

There were many other little things to do, and errands to run, Mr. Emberg said, but Larry would pick them up in time.

"Now then, Peter," called Mr. Emberg—"or never mind, I guess you had better do it, Bud," to the tow-headed office boy. "You show Larry around a bit, so he'll know where to go when I send him."

"Come ahead," said Bud with a smile.

As they passed Peter, who seemed to be sulking in a corner, Larry heard him utter:

"You wait, Larry, or whatever your name is, I'll fix you for buttin' in here. You'll wish you'd never come."

"Don't mind him," said Bud. "He's afraid he'll lose his job."

"Why?" asked Larry.

"Oh, he's made two or three bad mistakes here lately, and I guess he's afraid they got you in his place. But don't let that worry you, only look

out for Pete, that's all, or he may do something you won't like."

"I will," replied Larry, as he followed his friend to learn something about the mysteries of a big newspaper office.

CHAPTER VII

THE MISSING COPY

Bud first showed Larry how to work the pneumatic or compressed-air tube. Around it stood several other boys who seemed to be quite busy. Now and then one would dash in with a bunch of paper, grab a tube, stuff the copy in, and yank the lever over. A hissing, as the imprisoned air rushed into the pipe, told that the copy was on its way to the composing room.

"Where are those boys from; other papers?" asked Larry.

"Gosh, no!" exclaimed Bud. "No boy from another paper would dare come in here; that is while he worked for another paper. We'd think he was trying to get wind of some exclusive story we had. Those boys are from the different departments. One carries copy from the state department, another from the sporting room, and another from the telegraph desk."

Then Bud briefly explained that there were several editors on the paper. One took charge of all the news in the city, and this was Mr. Emberg. Another handled all the foreign news that came in

over the telegraph. Still another took charge of all matters that happened in the state outside of the city and the immediate surrounding territory. Then there was the sporting editor, who looked after all such things as football and baseball games, racing, wrestling, and so on. Each editor had a separate room, and there were one or two boys in each department to carry copy to the tube room, whence it was sent up to the printers.

"But our room's the best," finished Bud, with an air of conscious pride.

Larry was shown where the offices of the different editors were, so that he would know where to go if sent with messages to them. He was also taken to the composing room.

There he stood for a while bewildered by the noise and seeming confusion. A score of typesetting machines were at work, clicking away while the men sat at the keyboards, which were almost like those of typewriters. Larry saw where the tubes with copy in them bounced from the air pipe into a box. From that they were taken to a table by a boy, whose face was liberally covered with printer's ink.

There a man rapidly numbered them with a blue pencil, and gave the sheets out to the compositors.

"Sometimes you have to come up here for proofs of a story," Bud explained. "Then go over to that man there," pointing to a tall thin

individual, "and repeat whatever Mr. Emberg or whoever sends you, says. You see there are several different kinds of type in the heads of a story and each story is called according to the kind of a head it has."

"I'm afraid I'll never learn," said Larry, who was beginning to feel confused.

"Oh yes, you will. I'll explain it all to you. You probably won't have to go for proofs for several days. You'll only have to carry copy."

They stayed up in the composing room for some time, and every second Larry wondered more and more how out of so much seeming confusion any order could ever come.

Boys with long galleys, like narrow brass pans that corresponded in size to columns of the newspaper, and set full of type, were hurrying with them to a big machine where they were placed on a flat table, and a roller covered with ink passed over them. Then a boy placed a long narrow slip of paper on the inky type, passed another roller over it, and lifted off the paper.

"That's what they calling pulling or taking a proof," said Bud. "But come on now, we'll go back to the city room and rush copy. I guess there's some by this time."

There was quite a bit, for a number of stories had been handed in by the reporters, had been looked over by Mr. Emberg, his assistant, or the copy readers, and were ready for the compositors.

Peter had been kept busy running back and forth and was in no gentle humor.

"I'll fix you for this," muttered Peter to Larry and Bud. "I'll get even for running off and letting me do all the work. You jest wait an' see wot I do!"

He spoke in a low tone, for he did not want the city editor to hear.

"Cut it out," advised Bud with a grin. "I was sent to show Larry about the plant and you know it. Besides, if you try any of your tricks I know something I can do."

"What?" asked Peter.

"Who was smoking cigarettes?" asked Bud in a whisper.

"If you squeal on me I'll—I'll do you up brown," threatened Peter.

"It will take two like you," boasted Bud.

"Well, I can get somebody to help me," sputtered Peter.

"Copy!" called Mr. Emberg at that instant, and, at a nod from Bud, Larry sprang forward to carry it to the tube. It was his first actual work in the newspaper office, and quite proud he felt as he put the story in the case and sent it up the pipe.

From then on all three boys were kept busy, for as the morning wore on several reporters came in with stories, long or short, that they had gathered on their various assignments, and these

were quickly corrected and edited, and ready for the typesetters.

Back and forth, from the city room desk to the pneumatic tube, the three boys ran. Larry noticed that Peter was in the sulks and that he did not seem to care very much about doing the work. Once or twice he lagged down the hall instead of hurrying back from the tube after more copy as he should have done, once Mr. Emberg remarked sharply to him:

"Peter, if you don't want to work here, there are lots of other boys I can get."

"My foot hurts me," whined the boy, as he limped slightly.

"Why didn't you say so before?" inquired the city editor. "If it is very bad you can go home and come in to-morrow."

"Oh, it's not as bad as that," replied Peter, fearing lest he should be found out in his deceit. "I guess I can stand it."

Meanwhile Larry was kept on the jump. He soon got the knack of his duties and resolved to make himself as useful as possible. With this in view he kept close watch on the desk, and, as soon as he saw Mr. Emberg, the assistant city editor, or any of the readers, fold up copy, preparatory to handing it to one of the boys, Larry hurried up without waiting for the cry "Copy!"

"That's the way to do it," said Mr. Emberg

encouragingly, as he noticed Larry's remarkable quickness.

"Don't be so fresh," muttered Peter on one of these occasions, as he passed Larry in the long and deserted hall. "There's no use rushin' so, and the union won't stand for it. I'll punch your head if you don't look out!"

"I'm going to do my work right, and I don't care what you say!" exclaimed Larry. "And if there's any head punching to be done, I can do my share!"

"Um," grunted Peter. "I'll get square with you all right!"

It was now noon, and the paper went to press for the first edition shortly after one o'clock. So there was considerable excitement and hurry in all the departments, to get the important news set up and ready to be printed.

Reporters were hurrying in and out, the readers and editors were using their pencils rapidly, correcting and changing copy, and the three boys in the city room were kept on the jump all the time.

Shortly before one o'clock a reporter came in all out of breath.

"Man—killed—himself—in—the—Post Office just—now!" he gasped.

"Quick!" shouted Mr. Emberg. "We've only got ten minutes to catch the edition. Write as fast as you can. Short paragraphs. Here, one

of you boys bring me the sheets as fast as Mr. Steifert finishes them."

The reporter sat down to a typewriter, rapidly inserted a piece of paper and began to click out copy so fast that Larry wondered how he could see the keys.

"I'll carry the sheets to Mr. Emberg," said Bud to Larry, "and you get ready to rush them to the tube."

This was done. As soon as Mr. Steifert had one paragraph written he pulled it from the machine and handed it to Bud, who ran with it to the city editor. The latter quickly glanced at it, corrected one or two slight errors, and passed it over to Larry, who fairly raced down the hall.

When he came back another page was ready, and this was kept up until the story was all upstairs. Then Mr. Emberg proceeded to write a head for it and Larry carried that copy to the tube.

"Just made that in time," said the city editor, as Larry came back. "Now, Mr. Steifert, get ready a better and longer story for the next edition. You can take a little more time."

Matters became more quiet in the office after the first edition had gone to press. There were to be two more editions, and there still remained plenty of work to do. Once or twice Larry was sent to get proofs from the composing room and luckily he made no errors.

It was getting on toward four o'clock when the last edition was getting ready to close.

"Copy!" called Mr. Emberg, holding out a bunch of paper and not looking up to see who answered his summons.

Larry ran and grabbed it and sped down the hall. Halfway down he was met by Peter, who also had some papers in his hand.

"I'll put that in the tube for you," said Peter. "I've got some more to go in."

At first Larry hesitated. Then, thinking perhaps Peter wanted to make up for his recent unkind remarks, Larry gave him the copy and returned to the city room.

A little later the big presses began thundering in the sub-cellar, and soon the first copies of the last edition were off and a boy brought several to the city room.

"Here! What's this?" cried Mr. Emberg suddenly, after a hasty glance over the paper. "Where's that story about Alderman Murphy?"

"I handed it to you," said one of the reporters.

"I know you did, Reilly. I handled it and put a display head on it. It went up in time, but it isn't in. Who took that copy?" he asked, turning to the three boys who stood to one side of the room. No one answered for a second or two.

"It was written on yellow paper," went on Mr. Emberg.

"I—I did," replied Larry, wondering what was going to happen.

"What did you do with it?"

"I—I gave it to Peter," faltered Larry.

"You did not!" cried the other office boy, in an angry voice.

CHAPTER VIII

PETER IS DISCHARGED

"Yes, I did," replied Larry firmly. "I started down the hall with it as soon as Mr. Emberg gave it to me. You stood near the tube with some other copy and you said you'd send mine up for me."

"How about that, Peter?" asked Mr. Emberg.

"I—I don't remember anything about it," said Peter. "I sent up my own copy; that's all I'm supposed to do."

"No, it is not," said the city editor. "You are supposed to do what we are all doing here, work for the interests of the paper, no matter in what way. Larry did wrong if he let anyone else take any copy that was intrusted to him. Never do it again, Larry. When you get copy put it in the tube yourself. Then you will be sure it goes upstairs."

"But he asked me for it," said the new boy, feeling quite badly over the matter.

"No matter if he did."

"I didn't do it. He's just tryin' to get out of it," spoke Peter.

"We'll soon see who's to blame," came from the city editor. "You boys come with me."

Secure in the sense that he was right, Larry followed. As for Peter he would a good deal rather not have gone, only he dared not disobey. Up to the composing room Mr. Emberg led the two boys. There he asked the boy whose duty it was to take copy from the tubes whether he had received any on yellow paper, for it was on sheets of that hue that the missing story was written.

"No yellow copy came up this afternoon," said the tube boy. "The last batch I took out was a story about the new monument, and that was all."

"That's the copy you took, Peter, about the same time I sent the story about Alderman Murphy up," said Mr. Emberg.

"I don't know nothin' about no yellow copy," said Peter sullenly.

"I'll inquire in the copy room downstairs," said the city editor. With the boys following him, he went to the apartment where the pipe was located, in which the copy was sent upstairs. It was the duty of one boy to remain here all the while the paper was going to press to see that the machinery was in order.

"Who sent up the last copy, Dudley?" asked Mr. Emberg.

"Peter Manton," replied Dudley. "There was some other fellow that ran in the last minute, but

Peter took the copy from him and said he'd send it up."

"What kind of copy was it?" asked the city editor.

"On red—no—it was on yellow paper," replied Dudley.

"And did you see Peter put it in the pipe?" asked Mr. Emberg.

"No, sir. I didn't look at him closely. I had to turn on a little more compressed air then, and I was too busy to take much notice."

"Peter, you never sent that copy up!" exclaimed the city editor suddenly, turning to the sulking office boy. "You are up to some trick. Tell me what you did with it."

"I didn't——" began Peter.

But Mr. Emberg, with a quick motion, leaned forward and tore open Peter's coat. Out on the floor tumbed a number of yellow sheets of paper. Mr. Emberg picked some of them up.

"There's the missing copy," he said. "Peter, you can go downstairs, get what money is coming to you, and go. We don't want you here any more."

"All right," growled Peter sullenly.

He turned to leave. As he passed Larry he muttered in a low turn:

"This is all your fault. Wait until I get a chance! I'll pay you back all right, all right!"

Then, before Larry could answer, Peter shuffled

down the hall. And that was the end of Peter on the *Leader*, though it was by no means the last Larry saw of him.

Thus the first day of Larry's life on a big newspaper came to a close and it was with considerable pride that he started for home. He felt he had done well, though he had made one or two mistakes. He was a little worried about what pay he was going to get, and he had a little fear lest he might be paid nothing while learning.

His fears were set at rest, however, when, as he was going out of the door, Mr. Emberg called to him.

"Well, Larry, how do you like it?"

"First-rate," said Larry heartily.

"I forgot to tell you about your money," the city editor went on. "You will get five dollars a week to start, and, as you improve, you will be paid more. Perhaps you'll become a reporter some day."

"I'd like to, but I'm afraid I never can," said the boy wistfully.

"Why not?"

"I haven't a good enough education."

"It doesn't always take education to make a good reporter," said Mr. Emberg kindly. "Some of our best men would never take a prize at school. Yet they have a nose for news that makes them more valuable than the best college educated chaps."

"A nose for news?" asked Larry, wondering what sort of a nose that was.

"Yes; to know a good story when they hear about it, and know how to go about getting it. That's what counts. I hope you'll have a nose for news, Larry."

"I hope so," replied the boy, yet he did not have much anticipation.

He was thinking more about the five dollars he was to earn every week than about his prospects as a reporter. He knew the money would be much needed, and he resolved to do all he could to merit a raise.

There was much rejoicing in the humble home that night when Larry told about his salary. Mrs. Dexter also had good news, for the firm for which she sewed had given her a finer grade of work, at which she could earn more money.

"We'll get along fine, mother," said Larry.

"Ain't you afraid that mean boy Peter will hurt you?" asked little James, who had listened to Larry's recital of the discharge of the other office boy.

"No, I guess I can take care of myself," said Larry, feeling of the muscles of his arm, which were not small for a lad of his age. "And how are you, Lucy?" the boy went on, going over to where his sister was propped up in a big chair.

"I think I'm a little better," the girl said with a brave attempt at a smile. Yet a shadow of pain

crossed her face, and Larry knew she was suffering but did not want to tell, so as to keep her mother from worrying.

"You wait," whispered Larry. "When I get money enough I'm going to get you a big chair that you can wheel yourself around in. Then I'm going to have some big doctor cure you. You just wait, Lucy," and he gave her hand a gentle pat.

"Thank you, Larry," said his sister. Somehow it made the pain a little easier when her brother sympathized with her, and she resolved to be brave and say nothing at all of how she suffered.

That night, when all save Larry and his mother had gone to bed, Mrs. Dexter brought out a box of papers and began sorting them over.

"What are they, mother?" asked the boy.

"Old documents that are of no use," said his mother. "I thought I would burn them up and get them out of the way. I need the box to keep my thread and sewing materials in."

She began piling the papers up on the table, making two bundles; those she intended to keep and those she wanted to put in the fire.

"There's a lot of old deeds," she said. "I guess they might as well go, since we no longer own the property."

Larry glanced at them. They were mostly for the farm up in Campton which the sheriff had

sold. One document, however, caught Larry's eye.

"Hello," he said. "What's this? 'Property in the State of New York, in the locality known as the Bronx.' I say, mother, what's this?"

"Oh, that's a deed to some land your father took a good many years ago in settlement of some money a man owed him. It's no good though."

"Why not?"

"Because your father had it looked up. It's nothing but a piece of swamp land. He was swindled on that deal."

"Maybe it will be good some day," said Larry. "I heard some of the reporters talking in the office to-day about the Bronx. There's a river there. It's quite a ways out, and the reporters hate to be sent there on stories. But maybe some day, when New York grows bigger, the land will be valuable."

"I'm afraid not," said Mrs. Dexter with a sigh. "You might as well burn the deed up."

"No, I'll save it," said Larry. "It will not take up much room, and I may find a use for it."

"Very well," spoke his mother. "But these other papers you had better destroy."

Larry looked them over, and, seeing they all referred to the farm they had recently left, and which they no longer had a claim on, he tossed them into the fire. The other deed, however, he carefully put away. Though he did not know it,

the time was coming when it would prove of great worth to him and his mother.

Larry reported early for work the next morning. He was more busy than the day before, and the calls of copy seemed constant. He ran back and forth until it seemed that his feet were chunks of lead and his legs like sticks of wood. Yet he did not flag, and more than once Mr. Emberg nodded pleasantly to him to show that he appreciated the boy's attempts to please.

Of course Larry made mistakes. He sometimes got the wrong proofs and took the right ones to the wrong places. But he was good-natured when told of his errors, and more than one man on the paper, busy as they all were, took an interest in him, and did much to help him.

CHAPTER IX

LARRY GETS A STORY

THERE were few prouder boys in the big city of New York than Larry when, at the end of his first week, he carried home his wages. The five dollars seemed a small gold mine to him, and he handed the cash to his mother with the remark that some day it would be more.

"You're doing very well," said Mrs. Dexter. "I shall not worry now."

"I'm goin' to work to-morrow," spoke James. "I can sell papers. I seen littler boys than me sellin' 'em."

"I guess we will not have to start you in right away," spoke Larry. "There's time enough."

"Couldn't you get me some work to do?" asked Lucy with a smile, as she sat propped up in the big chair. "I could direct envelopes or something."

"You just get well and strong and maybe we'll talk about work," said Larry, for he could not bear to think of his sister suffering.

"I'm afraid I'll never be any better," said the girl a little sadly.

"Yes, you will!" exclaimed Larry, turning

away to hide the tears in his eyes. "I read in our paper to-day of a big doctor that's coming from Europe to cure people that have the same kind of spinal disease you have."

"But it costs an awful lot of money," sighed Lucy.

"I'll earn it!" said Larry determinedly.

During those days came a letter for Mrs. Dexter which had been sent to Campton from New York and then returned to the metropolis. The communication was from her sister and told about Mrs. Ralston's bereavement and stated that the widow had decided to pay an extended visit to some of her husband's folks who lived in another state.

"I hope she finds a good home," said Larry's mother, and that evening penned a letter to Mrs. Ralston, telling of the changes that had occurred in the Dexter household.

Larry began his second week of work with better spirits than he had the first. He began to feel confidence in himself. Another boy had been hired to take Peter's place and Larry lost some of the feeling of being the "cub" copy boy, as the newest arrival on a paper is called

He was rapidly learning many things that were destined to be useful to him. He could go after proofs now and make no errors, for he had come to distinguish the different kinds of type in which the headings of the stories were printed. There

were the big "horse heads," with three lines of very black type. Then there were the ordinary "display heads," of two lines, of not quite such heavy letters. Then came "lap" heads, smaller still, "twelve points," or type about half an inch high, and so on down to the small single-line heads, that were put on only the least important articles.

Larry began to have some idea of the necessity of being quick and accurate. He saw that, even near last-edition time, when everything was on the rush, the reporters and editors kept cool, and, though they had to work fast, they made every motion count.

The boy came to admire the coolness of the veteran reporter who could write a story with a boy standing at his elbow grabbing each page of copy as it was finished and rushing it to the editor, and thence upstairs.

"I'm going to be a reporter," Larry decided one day, when he had been on the paper three weeks. "I'm going to study and fix myself for a place on the *Leader*."

He began to see the importance that a really good and conscientious reporter holds in a community. He heard the newspaper men telling of the well-known public men they interviewed, the events of the day they took part in, and all this fired his ambition to be one of the *Leader's* reporters.

He spoke to his mother about it that evening and said he was going to attend night school.

"There's a teacher in one of those schools who lives on the floor above," said Mrs. Dexter. "I heard his wife talking to Mrs. Jackson the other day, and she mentioned it. His name is Professor Carlton."

"I'm going up and ask him about it," decided Larry, who, of late, had been getting in the habit of doing things quickly, as they did in the newspaper office.

Professor Carlton was at home, and Larry, after introducing himself, stated the object of his call.

"What do you want to study for?" asked the teacher.

"To be a reporter," replied Larry.

"I'm afraid it will take more than study to make you that," said Mr. Carlton. "You have to have a 'nose for news' I'm told."

"I know," said Larry, nodding gravely, "that's what Mr. Emberg, the city editor, says."

"Then you're on a paper now?" asked Mr. Carlton.

"Only a copy boy," replied Larry.

"Many a copy boy has risen to be a reporter, though," was the teacher's answer. "I hope you will. But about the evening schools. You see this is summer, and the schools do not start until September. That's two months off."

"I don't want to wait as long as that," said Larry. "I want to be earning more money as soon as I can."

"Perhaps I can help you," said the instructor, who had taken an interest in the lad. "I have little to do nights, and we might make a class of one, with you for the pupil and me for the teacher, say three evenings a week. You would learn more rapidly then, and be ready when the evening schools opened in the fall."

"I'm afraid I couldn't pay for the lessons," said Larry.

"Never mind about the pay," said the professor. "I'll be only to glad to help a boy that wants to help himself."

So it was arranged. Larry had a good common school education, but there were many things he was ignorant of that the boys of his age, in the city, were instructed in. So, under the direction of Mr. Carlton he applied himself to his books evenings, and made good progress, everything considered.

"If I can only develop that 'nose for news,'" Larry thought with a sigh. He imagined it was some magic gift that comes to only a favored few. And so, in the main, it does, but at heart every boy is a reporter, for if he doesn't tell his chum or the family at home the different things he sees during the day he's only half a boy. And telling the things one sees is, after all, the beginning of re-

porting, for that's all a newspaper does, only on a larger scale.

Like many another thing that one wants very much and which often comes unexpectedly Larry's chance came when he had no idea it was so close at hand.

He had been on the *Leader* a month now and was getting well acquainted not only with the editors and men on the staff, but the different ways of doing things, from the time a reporter brought a story in until it came out in the paper.

One hot August morning as Larry was on his way to work, he saw quite a crowd at the entrance to the Brooklyn Bridge, caused by a breakdown on one of the cars. He paused for a few minutes, as he was a little ahead of time. As he did so he noticed, on the outer edge of the throng, a handsomely dressed woman. In her hand she carried a large silver purse, through the open meshes of which could be seen a green roll of bills.

Suddenly a roughly dressed youth grabbed the purse, pulled it from the lady's hand with a savage yank, and bolted down a side street.

"Thief! Robber! He's stolen my money!" the woman cried.

Instantly the crowd forgot all about the breakdown on the bridge and raised a cry of:

"Stop thief!"

"There he goes!"

"Catch him!"

"Police!"

"Which way did he go?" asked a policeman, coming up on the run.

"Down there!" exclaimed Larry, pointing down a street that ran parallel with the bridge abutments.

The fleeing youth was running at top speed, but he made one mistake. He looked behind to see if anyone was after him, and did not see an ash barrel that stood in his path. He stumbled over this and went down in a heap, covered with cinders. He got up, however, before the policeman was near enough to grab him and started off again.

At that moment, however, from a side street there came a small cart, in charge of an Italian, and bearing a heap of peanuts and a roaster at full steam.

Before the thief could check his flight he had crashed, full tilt, into the Italian's cart. Right into the midst of the pile of peanuts he went, upsetting the vehicle and landing with it on top of him in the middle of the street.

With a shrill cry the Italian threw himself upon the man he supposed had purposely brought his wares to grief, and thief and peanut vendor were in the midst of a fight when the policeman came rushing up, and grabbed his prisoner The youth still held the purse, an odd-shaped affair, in his hand.

"I've got you!" exclaimed the officer. "Come to the station house."

"Not without a fight!" exclaimed the youth, aiming a blow at the officer.

The policeman drew his club, and it looked as if there would be a battle royal, when another officer came up and the two bluecoats soon subdued the youth. As they started to march him to the station house, in the basement of the city hall, which was near by, the Italian demanded to know who was going to pay for his peanuts.

"You can come to the sergeant and make a complaint against him if you like," spoke the officer who had made the capture.

The Italian, leaving his cart in charge of a friend who happened along, trailed after the policemen and their captive. A big crowd gathered, and the woman whose purse had been stolen, and who was almost in hysterics over her loss, was located and invited to go to the police station to tell her story and make a charge against the thief.

Larry had been in the van the whole time, as had a score of other boys determined to see the thing through.

"This will make a good story or I'm mistaken," he thought. "I'll get all the particulars I can and tell Mr. Emberg. It's something out of the ordinary too," and though the affair might have been tragic, he could not help laughing as he

thought of the fleeing youth covered first with ashes and then with peanuts.

A big throng trooped after the officers, and Larry was beginning to wonder how he was going to get into the police station to learn the names of the prisoner and the woman, for he knew the crowd would not be allowed to enter.

"I'll run ahead and get in before they do," thought Larry. "Then I'll be there when they come in."

So, taking a short cut, he reached the station house ahead of the throng.

"Well, what is it, boy?" asked the sergeant, looking over the desk.

"I'm from the *Leader*," announced Larry boldly as he had heard Mr. Newton tell the policeman that day at the fire. "A thief has just been arrested down the street. The officers are bringing him here, and I want to get the story."

"Pretty young to be a police reporter, aren't you?" asked the sergeant with a smile.

"Oh, I'm not a regular reporter yet," said Larry, not wishing to sail under false colors. "I'm just learning."

"I knew it," replied the sergeant with a smile, for he was acquainted with most of the *Leader's* police reporters. "But make yourself at home, and get all the story you want."

Then came a confusion of sound as the throng approached the outer doors of the station house.

CHAPTER X

LARRY MEETS HIS ENEMY

Into the main room of the police station came the two officers, their prisoner, the woman, and the Italian. Some of the crowd tried to follow, wild with excitement, but the doorman closed the heavy portal in their faces and several policemen on reserve duty came from the assembly room to aid in preserving order.

"Now then," said the sergeant briskly.

The officers lined their man up in front of the brass railing and the sergeant behind the desk began asking the prisoner's name.

"Ain't got none," was the laconic remark.

"I know him," put in one of the officers. "He's Patsy Dolliver. Lives down at Mulberry Bend and he's a bad egg, if ever I knew one. Ain't you, Patsy?"

Finding that it was useless to try and hide his identity, Patsy admitted his name, and then his age, residence, and a few other facts were noted down concerning him. The officer told his story.

The woman also related how Patsy had grabbed her purse, and the Italian told in excited language about his lost peanuts.

All the while Larry was making notes of names and residences, including that of the woman whose purse had been so nearly lost.

"I'll hold you for a hearing before the judge," the sergeant announced to the prisoner. "You'll have to come in the morning as witnesses," he added to the woman and the peanut man. "Lock him up, Jim," to the doorman, indicating Patsy; and the remarkable incident was closed for the time being.

But Larry, with the facts in his possession and a lively recollection of what had taken place, hurried to the *Leader* office.

"I just wish I could write it, but I don't s'pose I can, yet," he said. "But I can tell one of the reporters and he can fix it up."

He found Mr. Newton there ahead of him, and to the reporter Larry in breathless tones told what had happened.

"Good!" exclaimed Mr. Newton. "You just tell that to Mr. Emberg himself. He'll be glad to know you are so wide-awake. One of the men will write for you. Perhaps it will be a beat for us."

"Oh, but some of the other papers will be sure to hear of it," said Larry.

"They may get something about it, but not

many reporters are around that early. The cops who made the arrest will go off duty and there will not be many to tell the details of the chase. That's the best part of it. We may not get a beat in one sense of the word, but we'll have the best story."

When Mr. Emberg came in, Larry, after a few minutes of hesitation, got up courage enough to advance and tell the story.

"Well, you certainly had your eyes open," said the city editor.

"I thought it would make a good story," said Larry.

"So it will. You know what's news all right, youngster!"

And that was the best praise Larry had that day.

"Here, Newton," went on Mr. Emberg, "you fix Larry's story up. Give it plenty of space and throw in lots of fun."

Then Larry told his friend the story of the stolen pocketbook from beginning to end. Mr. Newton became infused with Larry's enthusiasm at the description of the upsetting of the ash barrel and the peanut stand. He made many notes and then sat down at a typewriter and began to make his fingers fly as rapidly as he possibly could.

Larry could hardly wait for the paper to come out that afternoon, so anxious was he to see "his

story," as he called it. There it was, right on the front page, under a display head:

THIEF MEETS WITH MISHAP

Steals a Purse, Is Buried Beneath a Shower of Ashes and Upsets a Peanut Cart

Then came the story, almost as Larry had told it himself with all the energy he could throw into it, but dressed up in true reportorial style. Larry was as proud as if he had written it himself.

"Who got the thief story?" he heard several reporters ask, after the first edition came out.

"Our new member, Larry Dexter," said Mr. Newton, pointing toward the copy boy. "Look out, fellows, or he'll beat us at our own game."

"Well, it's a good yarn all right," said one of the men. "Wish I had seen it."

None of the other papers had anything like the story. They all had a mention of the occurrence, but most of them dismissed it with a few lines, embodying the mere police report of the matter, for unless there is the promise of something big in a police item some reporters content themselves with what the sergeant gives them. This time Larry had been instrumental in securing what was almost as good as an exclusive item.

At the end of that week Larry found an extra dollar in his pay envelope. He went to Mr. Emberg, thinking a mistake had been made and that he had been given too much.

"That's for bringing in that story," said the city editor. "It was worth that and more to us. You'll get six dollars a week now instead of five dollars. You'll find it pays to keep your eyes and ears open in this business."

"I'm going to be a reporter some day," said Larry. "I'm studying nights now."

"Good!" exclaimed Mr. Emberg. "I'll help you all I can, and if there's a chance you shall have it. You have proved that you have a nose for news, which is something a number who think they are real reporters have not," and Larry felt prouder than ever.

It was several days after this that Mr. Emberg called Larry to him. At first the boy feared he had made some blunder and was about to be censured, but the smile on the city editor's face soon reassured him.

"I am going to give you a new line of work for to-day," said Mr. Emberg. "I hope you will make out as well as you did with your story."

"I'll try," said Larry.

"And I think you'll succeed," said Mr. Emberg. "I want you to go over to the Aldermanic Chamber in the City Hall. There's an important hearing being held there to-day by the Legislative

Committee on life insurance matters. Mr. Newton is covering it for us. You'll find him there at the reporters' table, and as fast as he has any copy ready you are to bring it over."

Larry thought this was rather easy work and wondered why the city editor laid so much stress on it.

"You'll have to be very quick," went on Mr. Emberg, "for we want to get as much in the regular editions as possible. You must be very careful, too, about the copy. There will probably be a number of boys from other papers there, and sometimes they play tricks. If they could make you lose your copy, or get it away from you so as to delay us, they would do it and their papers would be glad of it. So be careful of the copy Mr. Newton gives you."

"I will," said Larry, and he made up his mind that if any rival tried to interfere with him he would have a fight on his hands that would make him wish he had not bothered our hero.

The Aldermanic Chamber was filled with men when Larry reached it. He could hardly wiggle his way to the door, and was stopped by several policemen on guard who wanted to know what right he had to enter. But Larry had but to mention that he was from the *Leader*, and show a card with his name on, signed by Mr. Emberg, to gain admittance. Whereat Larry felt that newspapers were of much importance, as far as

gaining entrance into public place was concerned.

He saw a number of men with pencils and paper in front of them seated around a big table, and rightly guessed that they must be the reporters. Then he caught a glimpse of Mr. Newton and managed to make his way to a place behind his friend's chair.

"I'm glad you are going to chase copy to-day," said Mr. Newton. "There's going to be a hot time, and I need a boy I can depend on."

Larry sat down on the steps which surrounded the platform where the committee members were to take their places. The room was noisy with talk and full of bustle and excitement. Men were coming and going, their arms filled with books and papers. Uniformed messengers were entering and leaving.

Larry looked on either side of him and saw that he was not the only boy present. There were scores of lads from other papers, each one in attendance on some reporter and waiting to carry copy. The crowd increased, and Larry was beginning to wonder how he could get in and out of the doorway, which was choked with the throng.

Just then he looked down at the end of the room near the entrance. He saw someone regarding him with a malicious grin. It was Peter Manton, the former copy boy of the *Leader*.

Larry saw Peter lean over and whisper to a boy

who stood near him, and then the two gazed at Larry. In a few minutes Larry saw Peter beginning to work his way up toward him.

"I wonder if he's going to make trouble?" thought Larry. He found out a second later.

"Wait till I git you outside!" exclaimed Peter. "I'll fix you for having me discharged!"

Larry was about to make reply when someone shouted "Silence!" The meeting was about to start.

CHAPTER XI

LARRY HAS A FIGHT

LARRY was too interested in the proceedings for a while to pay any more attention to Peter. The latter had moved back to where he was at first, and though he occasionally glared at Larry the latter did not look his way more than once or twice. The reporters were all making their pencils fly, there was no time to take notes, and they had to write out the story as it went along.

"I'll have some copy in a minute," Mr. Newton whispered to Larry.

The boy stood up to stretch his legs, for he was stiff from sitting so long. He buttoned his coat up ready for a struggle through the crowd to reach the door.

"There," said Mr. Newton, folding up his papers, and handing a bunch to Larry. "Come back as soon as you take them to the office."

Larry thrust them into his pocket and started to make his way to the door. With a little feeling of uneasiness he noticed that Peter, also, had started out, accompanied by the boy to whom he had been whispering. Larry, after a somewhat

tight squeeze, managed to get out of the door. He found himself in a long corridor, that was almost deserted, for the usual loungers around the City Hall had crowded into the chamber to hear what was going on. Remembering his orders to hurry, Larry started on a run. He saw nothing of his enemy Peter and concluded the latter had gone for good.

Suddenly, as Larry was passing a particularly dark place in the corridor, a foot was thrust out. He stumbled over it, tried to recover his balance, and then went down in a heap.

"Quick now!" he heard a voice exclaim, and he recognized Peter's tones. "Git the copy out of his pocket while I hold him!"

"I will! Grab his hands!" another boy exclaimed, and then Larry felt someone land on his back as he lay prostrate, and grasp his wrists. At the same time a hand stole into his inside pocket.

Though he was somewhat stunned by the fall, Larry rapidly regained his senses. He realized that Peter and the other boy were trying to get the copy, either to make him lose his job for his carelessness, or else to have the *Leader* at a disadvantage. And Larry was inclined to believe it was a spite against himself rather than a plot against the *Leader* that Peter was carrying out.

Recovering from the first shock there came a fierce desire to fight Peter, to attack him and pre-

vent him from carrying out his plan. Though taken at a disadvantage Larry did not lose his presence of mind. He was a lad of considerable strength, which his country life had greatly increased.

With a sudden motion Larry arched his back, wrenched free his hands from the grip of Peter, and sent the latter rolling to one side.

"Look out or he'll git away!" he heard Peter cry.

Larry rose, felt in his pocket to see that the copy was still safe, and then sprang to the rear so as to get a wall at his back. Then he waited for the attack, which he knew would soon begin. At first he almost wished some help would come, but the corridor remained deserted. In fact it was not the main one, and was seldom used. Then, as he got his breath and recovered from the first surprise, Larry rejoiced in the coming contest.

That the two boys did not mean to let him go without a struggle was evident. In the half light he could see them whispering together. Then they advanced both at once, like the cowards that they were, to take an unfair chance.

Larry clenched his fists, spread his feet apart, braced himself, and gritted his teeth.

"Come on!" he cried.

And come on the two lads did. They made a rush at Larry that almost overwhelmed him for a few seconds. He felt blows all over him.

With his right arm half crooked, as a guard, Larry let out with his left. At first he struck blindly, for he could not see his antagonists well. He felt his fist land on someone's face, and, by the cry that resulted, knew he had had hit Peter.

"Give it to him!" cried the former copy boy of the *Leader*.

Larry was struck on the cheek and once on the nose. The blows seemed to give him new strength. Striking out with both fists, he sailed at his tormentors, landing several hard thumps on faces and bodies and getting several in return.

Then came numerous hard blows from the other boys, and Larry was almost beaten to his knees. He began to feel a little weak from a heavy blow in the stomach and his head was dizzy. He feared he would fall and that the boys would steal his copy.

The thought of this nerved him to double energy. Straightening up through a shower of blows, he made a sudden dash forward, hitting out with all his force. He felt his fist land on the chin of one of the lads.

An instant later there was the thud of a fall, and the boy with Peter cried:

"I've had enough! He knocked me down!"

"I'll fix him!" Peter cried, and he sailed into Larry harder than ever.

But the fight was more even now. The other boy had received punishment enough to last him

for a while and he sneaked off into a dark corner to nurse his hurts. But Peter kept it up, for he felt he had a grudge against Larry and intended to pay it off.

Blows were struck in quick succession. Twice Larry received hard knocks on the face, for Peter was no unscientific fighter, having been trained in the school of the New York streets. On the other hand, Larry was stout of arm, firm on his legs, and was long-winded. So, when our hero saw that he had but one antagonist left his spirits rose and he was almost glad of the chance to thrash Peter.

Once, aiming a hard left-hander at Peter, Larry slipped and went down in a heap. Without regard for the rules of sport Peter sprang on him and began hitting the prostrate lad.

This made Larry more than ever angry and exerting all his strength he turned over and got Peter down. Then Larry struggled to his feet.

"Get up!" he cried to Peter. "I'll fight you fair!"

"Come on, Jim!" called Peter to his friend. "We can do him now. He's winded."

"Oh, I am, eh?" asked Larry. "I guess you'll find I can use my fists a bit yet!" and he waited for the oncoming of the two.

All this while the fight had been conducted quietly though none the less fiercely. Being in a seldom-used part of the building it was not

heard or it would have been interrupted long before.

Now the two advanced at Larry again. He braced himself for the blows he knew would come. And come they did, for the two went at him again, hot and heavy. An unexpected blow from Peter's fist, landing on the point of Larry's jaw, made him feel dizzy. He felt as if he was going to topple over. Yet before he fell he resolved to give something in return. So, with a powerful half swing he struck out, straight at Peter's face.

He felt the blow land, and saw Peter reel. Then Jim closed in on him and Larry felt that the odds were too unequal. He was afraid his precious copy would be taken from him.

Suddenly there sounded a step on the marble floor of the corridor.

"Here, you lads! What do you mean by fighting in the City Hall?" a gruff voice asked.

Larry looked up, to see a big policeman approaching. The boy conquered his inclination to topple over and braced himself. Peter and Jim, at the sight of the bluecoat, took to their heels.

"Were they both goin' at ye at once?" asked the officer, seeing that Larry did not flee.

"They tried to do me up," said Larry.

"Ye didn't make out so bad," went on the policeman with a smile. "I saw that last blow ye landed. It was a dandy. What was the trouble?"

"Oh, one of 'em had a quarrel with me," replied Larry, not caring to go into details, "and he had a friend to help him."

"Well, run along now, an' don't let me catch ye fightin' agin," said the officer, trying to speak severely. "If I do I'll arrest ye. But," he added, his admiration of Larry's powers overcoming his instincts of duty, "that was a fine blow ye landed, all right."

Larry lost no time in hastening to the office of the *Leader*. He was tired and panting from the fight and the excitement of it, but in spite of this he ran all the way and reached the city room out of breath.

At first he felt inclined to tell Mr. Emberg about the matter. Then he thought better of it, determining to fight his own battles. So, having delivered the copy, he hurried back for more, finding Mr. Newton had a bunch of it ready for him.

Larry was not molested on this trip, and he noticed that Peter was not among the copy boys, nor was Jim. They evidently did not dare return, fearing Larry would inform the policeman of their actions.

All that day, until the last edition went to press, Larry rushed back and forth with copy from the Aldermanic Chamber to the city room. He was very tired when night came.

"Why, Larry!" exclaimed his mother when he reached home. "How did you get that big lump

over your eye? And your cheek is cut!" she added.

"Oh, another boy and myself had a little difference of opinion," said Larry.

"I hope you weren't fighting," came from Mrs. Dexter.

"Well I—I—er had to defend myself against two of 'em," said Larry. "It wasn't exactly a fight, I guess."

"I'm sure I'd worry if I knew you had fought."

Larry did not want to deceive his mother, but he knew that to tell her the circumstances would only worry her, so he passed the matter over lightly.

CHAPTER XII

A STRANGE ASSIGNMENT

THE insurance investigation lasted for several days and Larry was kept busy carrying copy for Mr. Newton. On the second day Peter Manton reappeared, with a large discolored spot over his right eye where Larry had hit him. The former office boy on the *Leader* did not glance at Larry, but, on the contrary, seemed anxious to escape observation. Jim did not come back.

"I'm not afraid of him," thought Larry. But he decided it would be better to run no risks of being late with his copy, so he determined to avoid an encounter with Peter.

With this end in view Larry used the main corridor in going and coming from the chamber. That was filled with people on various errands and Larry had no fear that Peter would try to stop him. In fact Larry was not physically afraid at all, but he felt he owed the paper a duty to avoid anything that would cause trouble.

But Peter showed no desire to make any. He kept out of Larry's way and seemed to be content

with attending to his own work of rushing copy for the reporter he was aiding.

Larry was not sorry when the last day of the investigation came. The novelty had worn off, and it was rather tiresome sitting and listening to questions and answers. The only relief came when he went out with copy and came back. The reporters, also, were weary of the grind.

"Well, Larry," remarked Mr. Newton on the afternoon of the final hearing. "I think we're entitled to a holiday. What do you say?"

"I don't believe we'll get it," said Larry with a smile.

"Maybe not a day off, but any kind of work will be a holiday after what I've been through. I'd like to report even a missionary meeting for a change."

For some time thereafter Larry was kept busy in the office. He proved himself very useful, and every day was learning more about the business. Meanwhile he was not neglecting his studies at home, in preparation for the night school.

With the professor he plodded over the books, learning to become a better reader, more proficient in arithmetic and in writing. Then too, he began to study history, for the teacher told him it was necessary, if he was to write about things modern, to know what had happened in the past.

So Larry not only dipped into the happenings of the past in this country but what had taken

place in others. It was hard work. After a long day at the office, to sit down and tackle dry subjects was something few boys would care about. It would have been easier to go off to a bowling alley or to the theater. But Larry, though he wanted to do those things, felt that he owed it to himself and his mother to try and advance himself. And advancement he realized could only come by learning more than he already knew.

One day, early in September, Mr. Emberg called Larry to him and looked the boy over critically.

"You seem pretty strong and healthy," the city editor said.

"I guess I am," replied Larry, wondering what was coming next.

"How would you like to take a trip under the Hudson River?" asked Mr. Emberg.

Larry did not know what to say. Occasionally the city editor joked, and the boy thought this might be one of those times.

"I don't believe I could swim that far," Larry said at length. "That is, not under water." On the surface, splashing about, Larry knew he would be at home, though he had never thought of tackling the big stream.

"I guess you won't have to swim," went on the city editor.

"What do you mean then?" asked Larry.

"I'm going to send you on a trip with Mr.

Newton," Mr. Emberg went on. "You'll have to start in half an hour."

"All right," responded Larry. He had formed the habit of not asking many questions, for he had found in the newspaper business it was best to follow orders and to hold oneself in readiness for anything that might turn up. Larry had no idea where he was going, but Mr. Emberg soon enlightened him.

"You know they have been digging a tunnel beneath the Hudson River, so as to bring passengers from Jersey City over to New York without using the ferry," the city editor went on. Larry did, for he had read of the project in the paper. "Well," resumed Mr. Emberg, "one of the tubes is about finished. All that remains is to cut through a thin brick wall, or bulkhead, as it is called, and one can walk from New York to New Jersey under the bottom of the river.

"The company in charge of the tunnel work has invited a number of newspaper men to make the first trip to-day, when the bulkhead will be cut through and the first complete passage under the historic river will be made. Mr. Newton is to go along to represent the *Leader*."

"But what am I to do?" asked Larry.

"You're going to help us get a beat I hope," said the city editor.

Larry's eyes brightened. He saw himself on the road to becoming a reporter.

"You see," Mr. Emberg went on, "the company in charge of the work is not exactly sure that their plans will succeed. So they have asked a number of newspaper men to go along on the trial trip. But they have been very quiet about it and no other paper than ours—at least I hope so—knows what the real purpose of the trip is. Most of the reporters think it is only a jaunt to see how the work has progressed. There have been a number such.

"So carefully have the builders laid their plans that they think, once all the reporters are down in the big tube, they cannot get out to say whether the thing is a success or a failure, in time to reach the afternoon papers. As for the morning papers, if the thing is a failure it will be so covered up by the engineers, that the reporters will never know it.

"Now my plan is this! I want you to go along with Mr. Newton. You will be his assistant, for each invitation admits two. If the thing should succeed, which I think it will, we want to know it this afternoon; not to-morrow. And if it does succeed, it will only be known to those down in the tube.

"The only way we could find out in the office would be to have some word from those in the tube or tunnel. The only way we can get word is for someone to come back from the tube. Mr. Newton could not leave, for, if he did, after the

wall had been cut through, his absence would be noted, and other reporters would rush out. Then we would not score a beat.

"But if you could go along, note what takes place, and then, when the chance offers, get away unnoticed and come out of the tube to a telephone on the surface, we could get the news ahead of anyone else. Do you think you can do it?"

Larry hesitated. It was a pretty big contract for a small boy, but he resolved to try it.

"I'll do it!" he said.

"I knew you would," said Mr. Emberg. "It's almost time for you and Mr. Newton to start."

The reporter came up a few minutes later, nodded to the city editor, and said:

"Well, are we going to try it?"

"With Larry's help we are," was the answer.

"Come along then," said Mr. Newton, as though taking a trip under the Hudson River was one of the most ordinary things in this busy world.

Larry put on his hat and, after a friendly nod from Mr. Emberg, left the office. The reporter and copy boy went down Broadway to the big Trinity building, adjoining the church of that name, and went to the office of the company that was building the tunnel. There they found a crowd of reporters; one from almost every newspaper in New York. The men were ushered into a finely fitted up room, and told to make themselves

comfortable until the president of the company, Mr. Lackadon, was ready to escort them.

"Keep a quiet tongue," advised Mr. Newton to Larry. "None of the others know what is up."

Larry nodded. Then he listened to what the other newspaper men had to say. Few of them knew what their assignment was, except that they were to come and report something about the tunnel that had been in construction for some time.

"All ready, gentlemen!" announced a voice, and the president of the concern appeared in the room.

"Where are we going?" asked several reporters of evening papers. "We'd like to send up a few lines about the story."

"It's a sort of a secret," said the president with a smile. "If any of you want to back out, now's your chance."

No one ever heard of a newspaper man backing out, so no one moved.

"Come on," said the president.

He led the way to the big express elevators and soon the crowd of reporters were on the ground floor. They went out the rear entrance and, by way of a number of back streets, to a dock on the New York side of the Hudson River where a steamer was in waiting.

"Keep close to me," said Mr. Newton to Larry.

Once aboard the craft little time was lost. It steamed to the Jersey City side of the river, and

there, disembarking, the reporters and the officials of the company who accompanied them walked through the yards of a railroad until they came to a group of small buildings.

"This is the mouth of the shaft that leads down to the level of the tunnel," said the president, pointing to a small structure.

Almost as if in a dream Larry followed Mr. Newton. Entering the building he found himself in the midst of a lot of machinery.

"Get on the elevator," said a voice.

Larry stepped on a wooden platform, which soon began to sink. The others were crowded about him. In a few minutes they found themselves at the bottom of a shaft fifty feet in diameter and sixty feet deep. As they landed, right in front of them yawned a black hole.

"The tunnel," said the president, with a wave of his hand.

There was a murmur of astonishment from most of the reporters, for they had never seen the big tube before.

"Now that I have you all here," the president went on, "I want to tell you that we propose, for the first time in the history of the world, to walk under the Hudson River!"

There was a chorus of remonstrances, for the reporters for the afternoon papers did not like missing a chance for a story, and they realized they could send no word now.

"If the trial succeeds," went on the president, "we will cut through the brick wall that separates the east from the west end of the tunnel. I think it will succeed as all but a very thin portion of the wall is gone. All that remains is to turn on a hydraulic jack that will cut down the rest, and the tunnel will be an assured fact."

"Can't we send word to our papers?" asked several reporters.

"I'm afraid not," was the answer of the president. "Those on the morning papers, of course, can tell what happens, but the evening ones will have to wait until to-morrow."

"We'll see about that," whispered Mr. Newton to Larry. "Keep close to me, and when I give you the word you skip back the way we came, tell the man at the elevator you want to get out, and reach the surface as soon as possible. When you do, ring up the office, and tell Mr. Emberg all you have seen."

"All right," whispered Larry.

"Forward!" cried the president.

CHAPTER XIII

UNDER THE RIVER

THE tunnel under the Hudson River was begun several decades ago. It was started from the New York side, a little south of Christopher Street, and continued out under the bed of the river for some distance. Then the company failed and they built a brick wall, twenty-four feet thick, at the end of the tube they had dug. It remained in that condition for many years, until a new company was formed. This concern took up the work where the others left off.

There were two tubes, each circular, and about twenty-four feet in diameter, dug under the river. They were separated by a wall of earth, and each tube was lined with heavy cast iron. In cutting the tube a big thing like an exaggerated apple corer was pushed through the earth sixty feet below the surface of the river bed by hydraulic force. To prevent the water from rushing in, the shield was kept filled with compressed air at a heavy pressure.

Up to within a few days this compressed air had been used in the tunnel, but when the re-

porters started through the tunnel was near enough completion to render it unnecessary. The heavy cast iron lining was all in place, except where the brick wall was, and it only remained to cut through the masonry, establish communication from one end to the other, fit a few pieces of cast iron into place, and the tunnel would be established. The cutting through of the wall was the event of great importance, and really marked the completion of the first stage of the work. Hence every reporter felt the need of getting a good story about it.

"We'll try to beat 'em," whispered Mr. Newton to Larry as the party started forward.

The tunnel was cut in a slanting or downward direction at first. It began several hundred feet back from the edge of the river and, when it was actually below the bed of the stream it was level.

It was quite dark in the big tube, save here and there where electric lights gleamed. Most of the party walked, but there were small cars, hauled by a cable, for the use of the directors and officials of the construction company.

Through the tube they went. In spite of the heavy lining, sustaining thousands of pounds of pressure, some water leaked in. It splashed down in big drops, and felt like rain. Once a drop fell on Larry's lips, and it tasted salty, just as the lower Hudson River does. Then he began to realize that he was in a queer place, under the bed

of one of the largest rivers in the United States. It hardly seemed possible that he was walking under the historic stream that Henry Hudson, in the *Half Moon*, discovered so many years ago.

As the party progressed, the president explained the workings of the machinery, and stated that when the concrete lining had been placed over the iron, there would be no leakage.

"Where are we now?" asked one of the reporters.

"Right under the middle of the river," was the president's reply. "Above us are the big ferryboats. The ocean steamers are sailing, and the tug boats are darting to and fro."

"What if the tunnel should break?" asked the same newspaper man.

"None of us would be left to tell what happened," was the reply. "The water would rush in and—that would be the end of us."

Larry shivered, though it was hot in the tube.

"But we didn't build this tunnel to break," the president went on. "You are as safe as if you were in your offices."

"I wish I could believe that," a young reporter remarked, with something like a shiver.

Here and there the gloom was lighted by an incandescent lamp. The cable, pulling small cars, in which the officers and directors of the company rode, while the rest walked, slid along on the grooved wheels. The way was obstructed by

huge pieces of iron, being some extra ones of those that formed the inner lining of the tunnel.

With occasional jokes, which a reporter makes even at a funeral, the party proceeded. Now and than a halt would be made while the president explained some technical point.

Finally the party came to a stop. It was quite dark and the few lights only seemed to make the gloom deeper.

"What's the matter?" asked Mr. Newton.

"We've come to some sort of a wall," another reporter replied. "It seems they have to cut through this before we can go any further. Gee! But I wish I had time to send something about this to my paper. It will be a dandy story."

"I guess there aren't any telephones under the Hudson," said Mr. Newton, nudging Larry in the ribs.

"No, but there may be some day. Well, I suppose I'll have to make a story for to-morrow, but the morning papers will have the best of it."

Mr. Newton did not reply, and Larry thought that perhaps the other reporter might be mistaken. He began to see what a fine thing it would be to beat the other papers. The whole party had now halted. There was a sort of inclined platform of boards built from the floor close to the roof of the tunnel.

Up this the members of the party walked until they came to a level place where they stood to-

gether. Overhead was the iron-ribbed lining of the big tube. It had only recently been put in place and, as it was not water tight, moisture from the river came through quite freely.

Big drops splashed down almost like rain, and it was salt rain at that.

"I guess I'll have to get a new suit out of the office, for mine's spoiled," said one of the newspaper men.

"And my hat's gone to grass," remarked another, as he contemplated his straw headgear.

"You want to be ready to slip back soon now," whispered Mr. Newton to Larry. "They're going to try the hydraulic ram on the brick wall. As soon as they start it I'll let you know. Then you can slip down as quietly as possible, make your way back through the tunnel, go up to the surface, and telephone to Mr. Emberg. He has the story almost written, for he knows something about the tunnel. All he wants to know are a few particulars which you can give him."

Larry nerved himself for the coming effort. There seemed to be a sort of uneasiness in the crowd, for some of them did not know what was to come. They were tired of being kept in the dark.

"We are now going to start the hydraulic ram," said the voice of the president. "It will cut through the brick wall and then we will step through the hole into the other part of the tunnel,

thus completing the trip from New Jersey to New York. Let me call your attention to the fact that this trip is made, not like the partial one of a year ago, through the northern tube under compressed air. We have so far advanced that we do not need to maintain an air pressure any longer for safety."

"All ready," called one of the engineers.

There was a little shifting in the crowd. Men in red shirts and big rubber boots began fumbling at some pipes and machinery.

"Here she goes!" cried someone, and Larry prepared himself to start on the back trip at a signal from Mr. Newton.

There was a rending, crashing, tearing sound. The brick wall began to crumble under the powerful force of the plunger worked by water power. Then came a dull thud, and silence.

"What's the matter?" cried the president.

"I'm sorry to say the ram's broken," replied the engineer.

"Cut the wall down with crowbars and pick-axes then," cried the president.

"I regret, gentlemen," he went on, "that we will have a little delay. The wall was thicker than we thought. We cut away as much as we dared and we depended on the ram to do the rest. It has failed us. But we will soon have a passageway through, and you will have been the first party to walk under the river without the use of

compressed air, which is something of an achievement."

"Oh, for a chance to telephone the paper!" exclaimed several reporters. But they knew there was no opportunity.

"Now's your time!" whispered Mr. Newton to Larry. "Hurry back, and as soon as you can get to a telephone tell Mr. Emberg all that you have seen and about the failure of the ram to work. I'd go, only if I leave the other men will notice it and they'll try the same trick."

Slipping through the crowd, Larry started back. He was not noticed amid the excitement. He could hear the blows which the laborers were beginning to rain on the brick wall and the thud of them sounded like thunder in the tunnel. Down the sloping planks he went until he found himself on the floor of the tube.

Then he began to run as fast as possible on the uneven surface and through the semi-darkness. Several times he stumbled over big sections of the iron lining and once he fell into a puddle of water. He got up, not minding the smart of his cut hands, and kept on.

The tunnel made a slight turn a few hundred feet back from where the wall was being cut through and this curve hid the throng from Larry. Now he was all alone in the big shaft and he began to experience a feeling of fear. Suppose some accident should happen? If the

roof should cave in? Or he should fall, strike his head, and be rendered unconscious?

All these things Larry thought of as he hurried on. But he tried to forget them and to think only of getting to the surface and telephoning the news. The fact that the hydraulic ram had failed to work made the story all the better for newspaper purposes.

Larry's one real fear was lest he might not be able to get through the air lock. This was a sort of double opening leading into the tube at the western end. There was no air pressure in it however, but the lock remained and had to be entered through small openings.

When the party had reached this, in going through the tunnel, they found the opening so narrow that but one could pass through at a time. Workmen had been stationed there to help, as the doors which formerly closed the lock were still in place and were heavy affairs. If one of them should happen to be closed Larry felt that his mission would prove a failure.

He kept on as fast as he could walk. He was glad when he came to an electric light, for it made the tube seem less lonesome. But the lights were few and when he had left one behind Larry began to wish the next one would gleam out.

When he felt the floor of the tube beginning to take an upward turn Larry knew he was approaching the end, and, also, the air lock.

"I hope the men have left it open," he said to himself.

He was almost running now. Suddenly something black loomed up in front of him, as he could see by the glare from a near-by electric lamp. He put out his hand and touched something cold and hard.

"It's the air lock!" he exclaimed. "And the door is shut!"

CHAPTER XIV

LARRY'S SUCCESS

For a little while Larry felt a sense of bitter disappointment. After all his effort and the plans of Mr. Emberg and Mr. Newton, to have the venture fail was, he thought, a hard thing. And fail it seemed the scheme must, since unless he could soon get to the surface and telephone the news, it would be too late for the day's paper and the others would have it to-morrow. Then the *Leader* would not score "a beat."

The boy went close to the big iron door and examined it as well as he could in the dim light. It was a massive affair with ribs of steel and swung on heavy hinges. It was built to withstand heavy pressure, though there was none on it now. It was fastened by means of a peculiar catch that was operated from within.

Larry passed his fingers around the edge. He began on the side where the hinges were, since he could not see very well. Not a crack was to be felt. Then, as his hand came around on the other side, he gave a start. He was aware of a slight opening.

"The door is not shut tight!" he cried. "Maybe I can open it!"

He felt around until he came to a place where the opening was widest. As he had discovered the door was not quite shut tight. He put his fingers into the crack and pulled with all his force.

The big plate of iron never moved. He might as well have tried to pull down the side of the tunnel. The door was rusty on the hinges, and, even had it swung freely the very weight of it was too much for a boy.

"I guess I'll have to give up!" thought Larry.

He moved back a bit, rubbing his hands where the edges of the iron had cut them slightly. As he did so his foot hit against something and he nearly stumbled to the floor. He saved himself by putting out his hand, which came in contact with something cold.

By the touch of it Larry knew it was a crowbar. He grasped it with both hands and pulled it from the crack in the wall where some workman had left it.

"Maybe I can pry the door open with this," he said. "Luck seems to be coming my way after all."

The bar was heavy, but Larry strained at it until he had inserted the wedge-like edge in the crack between the door and the side of the air lock.

"Here goes!" he exclaimed.

He pressed on the bar with all his strength. It did not budge.

"I guess it's tighter than I thought," gasped the boy.

Once again he pushed until his arms trembled with the strain. Again and again, throwing himself forward, he forced the bar away from him.

Then, just when he was ready to give up in despair, he felt the iron lever give slightly. So little was the movement he half doubted whether it had moved. But as he pressed harder and harder he felt it sway, and then he knew he had started the door to swinging.

"I must keep at it!" he panted, "or it will get stuck again."

Then with all his strength he pushed until, in the half-light, he saw the crack opening wider and wider until the door was half open and there was space enough for him to slip through.

"Hurrah!" cried Larry faintly. "Now to see if the other door is open," for the air lock had two portals.

He dragged the bar with him as he stooped to go through the small opening. The air lock was about ten feet long, constructed entirely of steel and iron, and was about as big around as a hoisting engine boiler. Larry had to bend almost double as he went through it. Fortunately he found the other door open, and a few seconds later he was out in the tunnel again.

"Now for a telephone," he cried as he sprang forward on the run.

Just ahead he could see a big patch of light that indicated where the round shaft led from the surface of the earth down to the floor of the tunnel. The going was easier now and the air was better. Larry soon reached the foot of the shaft.

He found a number of workmen there. They were covered with dirt and water and Larry knew they had been working in the tunnel.

"Where'd ye come from, boy?" asked one of them.

"I was with the party that went through a little while ago," Larry answered. "One of the men sent me back for something."

He did not say what it was, for fear some of the men might not think it proper for him to telephone the news to his paper.

"Want to go up?" asked the man in charge of the elevator.

Larry nodded. The man motioned for him to get on the movable platform which was about all the hoist was, and then gave the signal to start.

In a few moments the boy was at the surface. He made his way out of the engine room at the mouth of the upright shaft and hurried across the railroad yards in the direction he had come. On the way in he had noticed an office where there was a telephone and he made for this.

The man in charge gave permission for the boy

to use the instrument, though he stared somewhat in surprise at Larry, who was covered with dirt and water.

"Fall in the river?" he asked.

"No, I came through the tunnel," replied the boy.

Then he rang up central, was soon connected with the *Leader* office, and a few seconds later was telling Mr. Emberg what had happened. The city editor, who was familiar with the work, and the prospective battering down of the brick wall, could easily understand the situation from Larry's description. A few details sufficed and then, with a hurried "Good-bye," Mr. Emberg rang off, having told Larry to come back to the office.

"Are you a reporter?" asked the man in the railroad office, as Larry hung up the receiver.

"No, I'm only a copy boy," was the answer. "But I'm going to be a reporter some day. I am helping one of our men to-day."

"Well, I should say you would be a reporter," the man went on, for he had listened to what Larry was saying over the wire. "That was pretty slick on your part. The *Leader's* an all-right paper!"

"Glad you think so," replied Larry. "How much for the telephone charge?"

"Nothing," replied the man. "Glad to have you use it for such a big piece of news. So the tunnel is really cut through, eh?"

"It will be in a few minutes, I guess," replied Larry.

Then he started for the *Leader* office, first having borrowed a brush from the railroad man, and cleaned some of the mud from his clothes. Before he got back to his office Larry heard the boys on the streets crying:

"Extra! Extra! Full account of the opening of the big Hudson River tunnel!"

Larry bought a *Leader* and there, on the front page, under a big heading, was an account of the trip he, Mr. Newton, and the others had made that afternoon, and which was not yet finished. This time the press was a little ahead of happening and the *Leader*, through Larry's success, had scored a big beat.

Arriving at the office Larry found everyone but Mr. Emberg had gone home, for it was quite some time past the regular edition hour.

"You're all right, Larry!" the city editor exclaimed. "It's a fine story. Have any trouble?"

"Only a little," said Larry modestly, for he did not want to boast of opening the door that had given him so much trouble.

"It's a good story! It's a beat!" said the city editor half to himself. "They tried to keep it quiet, but we beat 'em at their own game. That fact about the hydraulic ram breaking was a fine feature."

Larry sat down in a chair, for he was tired.

Then Mr. Emberg, who seemed for a time to have forgotten that he was present, noticed him.

"You can go home, Larry," he added. "You've done enough to-day."

"I thought I'd stay until Mr. Newton came in," said the boy. "I'd like to hear how the thing ended."

"All right, I'm going to stay myself," said the city editor. He began looking over some proofs on his desk in readiness for the next day's paper. In half an hour Mr. Newton arrived.

"Hello, Larry!" the reporter exclaimed. "Did we do 'em? Well, I guess yes! How about it, Mr. Emberg?"

"You and Larry certainly covered yourselves with glory," spoke the city editor. "First thing we know Larry will be out getting news himself."

"Well, I guess the other papers will sit up and take notice," went on Mr. Newton. "Not one of the other men got a line in to-day and they're half wild. It took quite a while for the men to cut through the wall. Then there was a lot of speech-making over the importance of the affair and we finished the journey, walking all the way from New Jersey to New York, under the river, though I can't exactly say it was without getting wet, for the tunnel leaked like a sieve after we got through the wall."

"It was a good piece of work," commented Mr. Emberg. Then with a nod to Larry and Mr.

Newton he went out. The reporter and the copy boy soon followed and, that night, Larry astonished his mother, sisters, and brother with the wonderful tale of going under the river.

"It's dess like a fairy 'tory," said little Mary.

"Did you find any gold?" asked Jimmy, his eyes big with astonishment.

"No," said Larry with a laugh, "I wish I had."

"And didn't you see any goblins?" asked Lucy with a smile.

"Nary a one," was Larry's reply. "Though some of the workmen looked like 'em in the darkness with their rough clothes and big boots on."

"I'm afraid it was a dangerous place," spoke Mrs. Dexter. "I don't believe I want you to be a reporter, Larry, if they have to take such risks."

"Oh, it isn't often they have to go into such places," replied Larry. "There was no danger. And think of being able to say you have been under the Hudson River! It's like being a discoverer."

"Well, I'm glad you're home safe," said his mother. "Now we'll have supper."

CHAPTER XV

LARRY GOES TO SCHOOL

It was with some surprise that Larry found a dollar extra in his pay envelope Friday afternoon, for it was on that day that the assistant cashier used to come around with the salaries. There was a five-dollar bill and two one-dollar bills, and Larry, who since his first raise had been getting six dollars a week, thought a mistake had been made.

He went to Mr. Newton at the first opportunity and told him about it, asking his advice.

"You'd better speak to Mr. Emberg about it before you hand the extra money back," said the reporter, with a smile.

"Eh? What's that?" asked Mr. Emberg, when Larry, in hesitating tone, mentioned the matter. "An extra dollar, eh? Well, that's all right, Larry. That's a reward for your good work in the tunnel. I heard yesterday about you opening the door. Some of the workmen who knew it was closed found it opened, and knew you must have done it. I want to say that the *Leader* appreciates such efforts. And the only way we

can show appreciation is by giving people more money. So you'll get seven dollars a week now. I hope it will be much more in time."

Larry glowed with pleasure, more at the kind words than at the increase in wages, though, of course, that was very welcome.

"My, you're getting rich," said Lucy that night when, at the supper table, he told of his good fortune.

"I mean to be, some day," spoke Larry confidently. "I want to be rich enough to hire that big doctor that's coming to New York soon, so he can cure you."

"I'm afraid there's no hope for me," replied Lucy, turning her head so as to hide her tears. Her pain had been worse lately, though she had not complained.

Mrs. Dexter was much rejoiced over her son's advancement, for every bit of money was needed. She could not earn a great deal, and there was much food to buy as well as clothing for the children. She had saved about one hundred dollars of the money she had had when she came to New York, but this she had put away in case of sickness.

It was now about the middle of September. Larry had kept up his studies with the professor and had made good progress.

"The night schools open next week," said Mr. Carlton one evening, after he and Larry had

closed the books. "I suppose you are going to start in."

"Yes, sir," said Larry, "and I'm very much obliged for the help you have given me."

"I was only too glad to do it," replied the professor. "I hope you will get on well in your classes. If you need help come to me."

Larry learned from the professor the proper night school to apply at on the evening the term opened. It was some distance from the house where Larry lived. He started off with well wishes from his mother.

He found quite a crowd of boys around the doors, for the school had not yet opened. The youngsters were skylarking, laughing, shouting, and playing tricks. It was almost like a day school, Larry thought, except that the boys were bigger, for all of them worked in the daytime. Some came from a desire to educate themselves, but a number were obliged to attend under the factory laws. These laws provided that if a boy went to work too young he must make up for it by attending night school.

It was these latter lads who seemed to be making the most fun. They evidently did not care much about the lessons.

"Here comes another!" cried a voice, as Larry walked down the street toward the school. "Let's make him run the gauntlet!"

"Line up!" shouted several, and they formed a

narrow path, with boys on either edge of the sidewalk, making a lane which Larry would have to pass through. At first he did not appreciate what was up, but when he saw the lads raise bundles of books or papers, and prepare to hit him as he passed along, he knew what was coming.

It was fashioned after the gauntlet the Indians used to force their prisoners to run through, only in the olden days death was often the end of the game. Here it was mainly for fun, though sometimes very rough.

"Soak him now!" cried several as Larry reached the head of the line and started through the lane of boys.

At first Larry hesitated. Then he realized that if he turned back the boys might call him a coward. And he felt that if he was to go to school with them it would be an unpleasant thing to bear that name. So he resolved to run the gauntlet, come what might.

Shielding his head with his upraised arms he entered the lane. Thick and fast the blows rained on him. Most of them came from bundles of paper and did not hurt much. As books, however, came down on Larry's head they made him wince. But he only joined in the shouts of glee and made up his mind not to care.

"He's game all right!" cried several of the older lads. "Soak him, fellers!"

"Whoop!" yelled the crowd, with as much vim

as did ever the Indians shout over the discomfiture of a captive.

Larry was halfway down the line. He got some pretty hard knocks there, as the bigger lads were at that point. One blow sent his hat sailing from his head. He was about to stoop and pick it up, but someone yelled:

"Go ahead; we'll save it for you!"

On he ran. He began to wish he was at the end of the lane, which seemed to be getting longer instead of shorter. The blows came thicker and were harder. In fact they all seemed to be from bundles of books now, as few of the remaining boys had paper. But Larry was not going to back out.

The excitement was growing, as several other luckless ones had been made to take the dreaded journey. This took some attention away from Larry, for which he was thankful. Now he was within a few lads from the end of the line. Several vigorous blows were given, making Larry's arms and head sting with pain. Then, just as he was about to emerge from the gauntlet, someone put out a foot and tripped him. Larry threw out his hands and saved his head from hitting the pavement, but his palms were cut by the fall.

He staggered to his feet, anger in his heart, and a desire to tackle the boy who had tripped him so unfeelingly.

"That's a mean trick!" exclaimed several of the boys.

"Who did it?" asked Larry.

"I did!" exclaimed a boy on the end of the line. "What of it?"

Larry turned and saw grinning at him Peter Manton, the rival office boy.

"If you want to fight say so," sneered Peter, advancing toward Larry.

Larry was nothing of a coward. He was not afraid of Peter, and felt that if he gave him a good drubbing, which he was confident he could, from his experience in the City Hall, it would only be what Peter deserved.

A crowd of boys, scenting what always is an attraction, regardless of the right or wrong of it, made a circle about the two. The gauntlet was forgotten in the prospect of something more exciting. Larry clenched his fists and advanced with firm footsteps.

At that instant the school bell rang and the doors were thrown open. Several teachers came out to form the boys in line, and a policeman, one being always on duty at the evening schools, made his appearance.

"Come now, steady! No scrappin'!" exclaimed the officer. "Yez'll all go in quiet an' orderly like or I'll tap yez one or two wid me sthick!" and he swung his night baton with a suggestive air.

"Form in line!" exclaimed the teachers.

The crowd about Larry and Peter dispersed. The boys had no desire to be caught aiding a fight the first night of school, since many of them had their fathers to reckon with and did not want to be expelled.

As for Larry he felt that he had a just cause for a battle with Peter. The latter, however, did not stay to see the outcome of his challenge. As soon as there was an excuse he broke away from the encircling crowd and made for the open door. Perhaps he had too good a recollection of Larry's sturdy fists the time they had met in the City Hall corridor.

At any rate the fight was off for that night, though Larry determined he would pay Peter back the first chance he got. Into the different rooms the boys crowded. The teachers, with a skill born of long experience, soon separated them into classes.

Larry was somewhat surprised, when, with a number of other boys, he had marched into a room, to see, seated in it, half a score of men. He then learned for the first time, that a number of grown persons, who had had no chance to study when they were young, attended the night schools. They were trying to learn more so as to get better positions. There were quite a few foreigners also, whose main object was to learn the English language.

The teacher in Larry's class put the boys

through a rough and ready examination. To Larry's delight he found he was able to answer with ease the test questions. This was because of his preliminary study with the professor.

The teacher, seeing he was a bright boy and well grounded in the rudiments, passed him on to a higher class, where Larry settled down for the term.

Thus began his first night at evening school, a strange experience for him. There was little studying done at the initial session. The boys were enrolled and then, after a short lecture by the teacher, who urged the lads to study, the class was given a lesson to prepare for the next night and then dismissed.

Tired and aching from his experience, with somewhat of a feeling of anger against his old enemy Peter, and with his head filled with thoughts of the new life opening before him, Larry went home. He found his mother and Lucy still up, anxious to hear how he had made out.

Larry related to them his experiences, telling of the gauntlet only as a game and making light of his hurts.

"Aren't they pretty rough boys, Larry?" asked his mother.

"No rougher than many others," replied Larry, bound to stick up for those with whom he was to associate.

He studied some of his lessons that night. Then he took his spelling book with him to the office, thinking he would get a chance during the spare hours of the day, or at lunch time, to go over the exercises.

CHAPTER XV

LARRY AT A STRIKE

Larry's desire to get a little study in during his spare moments was the cause of some trouble between him and the office boy who had taken Peter's place. This lad's name was Tom Mead, and he was much the same type of a youngster as Peter was. Not that he was bad, but he was up to sharp tricks, and he did not like to work when he could get out of it.

Bud Nelson was, by right of long service, the head office boy in the city room. Larry came next, and then Tom.

Things had been pretty lively in the *Leader* office for the past week, as there was an election on and there were many stories for the reporters. This made much more copy than usual, and, consequently, more trips from the city room to the pneumatic tube.

The boys had fallen into the habit of taking turns with rushing the copy, which went up in batches, so that the work would be more evenly divided. At Larry's suggestion there were three chairs in a row. When one boy took some copy

to the tube he came back and took the end seat. The boy who had been immediately behind him had, in the meanwhile moved up one seat to be ready for the next batch. Thus they had to run only a third as often as before, and the work was shared evenly.

When it came his turn to take the rear seat, which insured him several minutes of quietness, Larry would take out his lesson book and study. This did not seem to meet with the approval of Tom, who had a dislike for "book-worms" as he called them.

"Regular sissy-boy," he said of Larry, though he did not venture to call our hero that to his face.

One afternoon, when Larry had hurried to the tube with a bunch of copy he came back, expecting to take the last seat, which had been occupied by Tom. He found the latter still in the end chair, and the boy showed no signs of moving up.

"Move ahead," said Larry, in a low tone.

"Move yourself!" exclaimed Tom. "I've got as good a right here as you. I'm tired of chasing copy while you read books. I'm going to take a rest."

"I'm studying, not reading," said Larry. "Besides I carry my share of copy. It will be your turn in a minute."

"Copy!" called Mr. Emberg, and Bud, who had moved to the first chair, jumped up and ran for it.

"It's your turn next," said Larry to Tom.

"I don't care if it is," was the answer.

"Copy!" cried Mr. Emberg's assistant.

Tom did not leave his seat.

"It's your turn," repeated Larry.

"I don't care if it is!" exclaimed Tom. "Go with it yourself if you're in such a hurry."

"Copy here!" was the cry. "Come, what's the matter with you boys? Going to sleep?"

Mr. Emberg, wondering at the delay, looked up. He saw Bud returning to the room, and, being aware of the understanding among the boys about their turns, looked to see what the hitch was between Larry and Tom.

"Whose turn is it?" asked the city editor. "Be quick about it. Don't stand there all day. The paper has to come out."

"It's his turn!" exclaimed Larry.

"Well, he's always readin'," growled Tom. "I'm tired of runnin' with his copy."

"I'm not always reading!" declared Larry, determined to have justice done. "It was my turn to take the last seat, but he wouldn't move up for me."

"He's always got a book in his pocket," growled Tom.

"Whose turn is it?" demanded Mr. Emberg, coming over to where the boys were and addressing Bud.

"I think it was Tom's," said Bud.

"Well, then I'll go," growled the newest office boy, with no very good grace.

"What book are you reading?" asked Mr. Emberg of Larry.

"I wasn't reading, I was studying," was Larry's answer as he produced his speller and handed it to the city editor.

"Um!" remarked Mr. Emberg. "Spelling, eh? Well, you'll need it in the newspaper business. But don't neglect your work to study, Larry."

"No, sir," replied the boy, yet he felt that Mr. Emberg was not displeased with him. "And I want you boys to stop quarreling about this carrying of copy," the city editor said. "Each one must take his turn."

"Squealer!" whispered Tom when he came back, and he slyly shook his fist at Larry. "I'll fix you!"

So Larry seemed to have made two enemies in a short time. But he knew that he had done no wrong and he felt that it was not his fault. As for being afraid of either Peter or Tom, such a thought never entered his head.

Larry was beginning to be of much service around the *Leader* office. He was quick to understand what was wanted, and none of the other boys could go to the composing room and get a proof as rapidly as he could. He took a pleasure in his work, and never shirked the carrying of copy.

Occasionally he was sent out with the reporters who had to go some distance away to cover stories, to bring back their copy. He liked this sort of work. Best of all he liked to go with Mr. Newton, for this reporter, being one of the oldest and most valuable men, had important assignments, and usually went to some interesting place.

It happened that there was a strike on one of the lines of electric cabs operated by a private company in the upper part of the city. From a small affair the matter grew to be a large one, since the strikers would not work themselves, nor did they want to let men called in to fill their places take out the vehicles.

The result was a war between the union and non-union factions. Matters grew so hot that the police had to be called out several times, for a cab operated by a "scab," as the non-unionists were called by the strikers, was likely to be stoned, upset, and the occupants injured. The strike grew in size until the whole electric cab system was involved.

Most of the trouble centered around the headquarters of the cab concern, pretty well uptown, and there were several rows between the strikers, the non-unionists, and the police.

"I think you had better cover that strike," said Mr. Emberg to Mr. Newton one day. "You'll have to remain on the scene all day. I'll send a

boy up with you and you can send your copy down. Telephone if anything big happens, otherwise write the story as it goes along and send it in. Make it interesting, for the people like to read about such things. What boy do you want?"

"I'll take Larry," said Mr. Newton. "He's quick and smart."

"That's the reason I like to have him in the office," said the city editor. "But go ahead, take him with you. And you'll have to keep an eye out for him and yourself too. The strikers are in an ugly mood, and they have little use for the papers."

"I'll look out," said Mr. Newton.

Larry went uptown to the office of the cab concern. In order to have a headquarters near the scene of battle Mr. Newton arranged to have the use of a little store near the cab stables. There was a telephone in it, and a small table where the reporter could write.

Larry and Mr. Newton reached the place about nine o'clock in the morning. No sooner had they arrived than there was a fight between the union and non-union forces. Several of the former attacked a cab taken out by a new man. They pulled him from the seat and then, turning on the power full, allowed the motor vehicle to run wild about the streets.

Several persons had narrow escapes from being

injured and two horses were knocked down by the big cab with no one to guide it. Another horse ran away from fright. The police reserves were sent for, and altogether there was considerable excitement.

Mr. Newton wrote a lively story of the happening, and sent Larry back to the office with it. Then he sat down in the store to await developments. They were not long in coming, for, pretty soon, the strikers upset a cab. So, when Larry got back, there was another batch of copy waiting for him.

"Plenty of stories!" cried Mr. Emberg.

Newsboys brought several copies of the *Leader* around to the headquarters of the cab firm that afternoon, and the story of the morning's happenings was eagerly read by the strikers.

They did not seem to like the frank manner in which Mr. Newton had described their doings and there were several murmurs against the "capitalistic press."

"There's the reporter what done it!" exclaimed a big striker, pointing to Mr. Newton, who had stepped from the store to see how matters were coming on.

"Let's soak him!" cried several.

There was a movement in the crowd, but the police were on the lookout for trouble and made the men disperse, at which there was more grumbling.

"Aren't you afraid?" asked Larry of the reporter.

"Not a bit," was the reply. "I'm used to having trouble. I'm not afraid of them."

The strike was worse the next day, and so many violent acts were committed that extra policemen had to be sent for. Several strike-breakers were attacked as they tried to run the electric cabs and were quite badly hurt. Mr. Newton wrote vivid stories about the occurrences, and the *Leader* had a strong editorial, condemning the strikers.

This made the union men more angry than ever at the *Leader*, and they seemed to think Mr. Newton was the chief one on whom they could vent their ill feeling. They shook their fists at him whenever he appeared, and once a stone was hurled through the air at him, narrowly missing his head.

"You'd better look out," some of the policemen advised him.

Larry had plenty of copy to take down that day, and made three trips. The last two times he noticed as he was going up the stairs of the elevated road, where he took a train that brought him close to the *Leader* office, three men regarding him closely. Once he heard one of the trio say:

"That's him!"

However, he did not think they meant him,

and so he gave the matter no more consideration. He took the story to the office and came back for more. There was quite a bunch of copy waiting, as several incidents had occurred that Mr. Newton had preferred writing about instead of telephoning.

As Larry was going up the stairs to the train with this last batch of copy he saw the three men again.

"Now's our chance!" one of them cried.

Two of them made a grab for the boy, for the stairs were screened in from observation, and no one was in sight.

CHAPTER XVII

TAKEN PRISONER

At first Larry thought they were perhaps only trying to play a joke on him. He involuntarily moved to one side, but, as he did so, one of the men grasped him by the coat collar. Larry began to struggle, but another of the men clasped him about the arms, and a hand was placed over the boy's mouth to prevent any cry issuing.

"Whistle for the cab!" the shortest of the men whispered, and a shrill note came from the lips of someone.

Larry felt himself lifted up and borne down the stairs. He heard a confused noise and then a loud explosion. It subsequently developed that some of the strikers set off a bomb at that time. This drew a big crowd near the scene of the explosion and the vicinity of the elevated railroad steps was almost deserted.

A carriage drove rapidly up to the foot of the steps. Larry, struggling against he knew not what, was unable to free himself. He was bundled into the cab, two of the men followed, and the door was slammed shut. Then the driver

cracked his whip and the horses started off at a gallop.

Even then Larry could not believe that the men meant to take him. A number of explanations came into his mind. He thought he was mistaken for another person, and again he imagined it might be some prank of college students, though the men did not look like youths who attended a university.

One man had kept his hand over Larry's mouth, but once they were in the cab he removed his palm and substituted for it a cloth gag which effectually prevented the boy from calling out.

Larry strained his ears to catch anything the men might say, in order to learn what their purpose was regarding him. In this, however, he was disappointed, as the men maintained silence. The only sound was the rumbling of the carriage over the cobblestones. Occasionally this would cease as an asphalt stretch would be reached.

"They'll release me as soon as they find they have the wrong person," thought Larry. "It would make a good story if I could find out all about it and what their real object is."

Even in his somewhat perilous position Larry had a thought for his paper, as all good reporters should have. Now the cab seemed to be in a less thickly settled part of the city. By glancing through a small crack in the window shade, Larry could see stretches of field instead of solid blocks

of houses. The men, too, seemed to be less apprehensive of pursuit, for they began to talk in low tones, though Larry could not hear what they said.

At length, however, Larry heard one ask the other:

"Has he got the papers with him?"

"Sure," was the answer from the other man. "I saw him put them in his pocket. Shall I take them out?"

"No, we'll wait for the boss," was the answer.

Larry heard and wondered. What papers could the men be referring to? Clearly they had made a mistake, and must have expected to capture some other person.

"I haven't any valuable papers," thought the youth.

Then, with a start, he remembered the bunch of copy with which he had started for the *Leader* office when he was caught. He realized that if it was not soon delivered it would be too late. The thought of this made him half wild, for he did not want to fail in his mission.

He began to struggle to free himself with a strength that, for a moment, took all the power of the men to subdue. Larry kicked with his feet and struck out with his arms. He tried to get rid of the gag to call for help, but it was too tightly fastened on.

For a few minutes there was a lively time in the

carriage, but the driver did not appear to notice it, for he kept his horses going. At length the men succeeded in getting hold of Larry's arms and legs and holding them firmly.

"Shall I tie him?" asked the shorter of the two men.

"No, we're almost there now," was the answer from the other. "We can easily hold him until then."

"He certainly put up a good fight," was the other's comment. "I never saw such a lad. I hope he doesn't make another row."

"We'll fix him if he does," said the tall man.

Larry was exhausted from his efforts. He saw that it would be of no use to fight the two men, and so he resolved to remain quiet until he found a better chance of escaping. At the same time he could not help wondering what in the world it was all about, and why any men should want him. He was also much alarmed over his failure to get back to the office with the copy, but he did not see how he could help himself.

The carriage containing the boy and his captors now began traveling over more uneven roads, and Larry rightly guessed that they were in the upper part of the city, in the section known as the Bronx.

For perhaps an hour longer the vehicle moved on. Then it came to a stop. One of the men raised a curtain and peered out.

"Here we are!" he exclaimed. "We'll carry him in. Is anyone looking?"

"Not a person in sight," was the reply as the other man gazed up and down the street. "Go ahead."

Larry was picked up as if he was a baby and carried from the carriage, across the sidewalk, and into a dark hallway. During the short trip across the pavement the boy noticed that it was getting dusk. He knew then that the last edition of the *Leader* had gone to press and that the copy he had in his pocket had not reached the office on time. He felt like crying, for fear Mr. Emberg and Mr. Newton would think it was his fault he had failed in his work. They might believe he had deliberately stayed away.

But Larry's regrets at what might have happened were soon dispersed by what was taking place right around him. He felt himself being carried upstairs, and he made up his mind that it was useless to struggle any more. He was in the hands of strong men and it would be better to use cunning rather than force. He realized that he was near a big city and that there were plenty of police to ferret out crime of any description whatever.

Larry believed that his absence would soon be noticed and that a search would be made for him. So, though he was much frightened, he resolved to be as brave as possible and to wait with

patience until he was released. He had no fear that the men would do him any real harm.

The man carrying him went up four flights of stairs, and Larry knew, from that, that he must be in some sort of tenement house or some large factory. The places seemed quiet, and Larry thought if it was a house it must be a deserted one.

At this he began to have a little fear. He was afraid of being left all alone somewhere far from home, for he knew New York was a big place, and one might be within the city limits, yet miles from any real population. But the boy did not have long to indulge in fancies.

The man carrying him set him down rather roughly, and Larry staggered and would have fallen had not another man, who had followed the first one, caught him.

"Easy," said the second individual. "What are you trying to do to him? He's only a boy."

"I didn't mean any harm," growled the other.

"Now look here," began the man who had pleaded for gentler treatment, turning toward Larry, "we're going to take that gag out of your mouth. But mind you if you holler or make a fuss we'll put it in again. Will you promise?"

Larry would have done almost anything in reason to get rid of the rag that was nearly choking him, so he nodded an assent.

"That's the way to behave," said the man, evi-

dently pleased. "We'll be as decent as we can with you, even though the boss did say to give you all you deserved."

He removed the gag, and Larry breathed a long breath of relief. At the same time he wondered what the man meant by saying he was to be given all he deserved.

What did he deserve, anyhow? And who would want to harm him? It was too much for Larry. He began to think it was all a bad dream and that he would presently wake up and start for the office.

"It won't do you much good if you do holler," the man went on. "There's no one in this old factory and there's not a house within half a mile. So if you want to use your lungs, why, go ahead."

Larry's mouth was sore and stiff from the gag. His lips were swollen and he could hardly speak. Yet he wanted to question the men.

"Why have you brought me here? What do you want? I never did anything to you," he said brokenly.

"No, I don't know's you did," said the shorter of the two men. "You're brought here because the boss told us to, and you're here because you've been doing harm to our cause."

"Harm to your cause? What cause?" asked Larry, feeling sure he must have been taken for the wrong person.

"You know well enough," the man answered.

"I have orders not to talk to you for fear you'll find out more than would be good for us, so you'll have to keep quiet now.

"We're going to lock you in this room. You can try and get out if you want to, only I wouldn't advise you to try. It's a good ways from the ground. We'll be on hand to stop any attempt. You'll be well taken care of for a while until this matter is all settled. If you're hungry we'll get you something to eat."

"I'm not hungry," said Larry, "but what do you mean by bringing me here? You haven't any right to do this."

"That's all right," said the tall man calmly. "You are here, and here's where you're going to stay for a while. The boss will be here, pretty soon, and you can make some arrangements with him, maybe."

"Can I have a drink of water?" asked Larry, whose throat was parched and dry from the gag.

"Sure," said one of the men. "I'll get you some, and a couple of sandwiches."

He was as good as his word, and presently came back with food and drink. The water made Larry feel better and he thought he had better eat something to keep his strength up.

The two men watched him as he munched the bread and meat. Suddenly there sounded from below a sharp noise as if a heavy door had been shut.

"Hark!" exclaimed one of the men. "What's that?"

"Someone's coming," said the other.

Footsteps were heard ascending the stairs. The men looked at each other and seemed alarmed.

CHAPTER XVIII

HELD CAPTIVE

THERE came a peculiar rap at the door. First two blows, then a pause, then three light taps, followed by three raps at long intervals.

"It's——" began the tall man.

"Shh-h!" cautioned his companion. "No names, remember. Let him in."

The other opened the door. A well-dressed man entered.

"Have you got him?" he asked.

"Sure," replied the two men at once. They had stood in front of Larry, so that the new-comer could not see him at first. At this, however, they moved aside and the well-dressed man got a glimpse of the boy. He gave a start.

"That's not the one!" he exclaimed.

"Not the one!" cried the tall man. "Sure he's the one. He's the one that was pointed out to us. Besides he has the papers in his pocket. I saw him put 'em in."

"Are you sure?"

"Of course." The tall man with a sudden motion plunged his hand into Larry's inside

pocket and pulled out the bunch of copy. The new-comer glanced hurriedly at it.

"It's the stuff," he said, "but, all the same, you have the wrong one. You got the messenger boy. The one we wanted is the reporter who has been writing all this stuff about the strikers. He's the one we want to get even with."

At last Larry understood why he had been kidnapped.

The heads of the strikers, incensed at the articles Mr. Newton had been writing about them, had determined on revenge. Whether they thought that by capturing a reporter they could stop the articles from going into the paper Larry could not guess. It was more likely, he thought, that the men merely wanted to scare Mr. Newton and make him tone down the descriptions of the acts committed by the strikers.

Persons who thought it to their advantage to keep out of the public notice, Larry knew, often tried to intimidate the reporters assigned to write them and their doings up, but he had never heard of such a bold attempt to bring about silence.

He realized that a plot must have been formed to capture Mr. Newton. But the men detailed to carry it out had mistaken Larry for the reporter.

"What shall we do? Turn him loose?" asked the short man with a nod at Larry.

"It's a bad blunder to make," spoke the well-dressed man, who seemed to be in charge. "I

don't see how you came to make it. But we dare not turn him out yet."

"Why not?"

"Why, he'd give the whole thing away, and the strike's not half won. As soon as he got out of here the police would come."

"I will not tell on you if you only let me go," said Larry. "I must get the copy to the paper. They'll think I've run away."

"They'll have to think it then," rejoined the leader.

"I promise I will not tell," repeated the boy.

"We can't trust you," replied the short man, in hard tones.

"We'll have to keep him here for some time," went on the well-dressed man. "Then we'll have to make another try for the real one."

Larry felt his heart beating fast at the thought that perhaps Mr. Newton, all unconscious of danger, might be caught by the men. How he longed for a chance to warn the reporter!

"It's going to be a ticklish job," rejoined the tall man.

"Can't help it," went on the leader. "We'll do the best we can. This place is far enough away. You two men will have to stay on guard. Give him all he wants to eat, but if he tries to escape—well, you know what to do."

"I guess so," muttered the short man, with an ugly look at Larry.

The three men left the room then, but Larry could hear them talking in low tones in the hall. He stole to a window, hoping there might be a chance to get away. He found it tightly shut. Besides the casement was five stories from the ground, and to leap that distance would have meant death.

By pressing his face closely against the window pane Larry could see that, about three windows over, on a line with the one he was looking from, was a fire escape. If he could only reach that, he thought, he could get away. But to reach it seemed out of the question. As he stood looking the two men who had captured him reentered the room.

"What were you doing?" the tall one asked him.

"Looking out of the window," replied Larry boldly.

"Be careful you don't try to get out," was the rejoinder. "The windows are all protected by burglar alarm wires. If you open one it will give the signal, and we'll catch you before you can go ten feet, so be careful."

Larry said nothing. There was a chair in the room, and he sat down on it. The tall man made a careful examination of the window. As he had said there were wires around the frame, but they seemed old and rusty and Larry half believed they did not work.

While one of the men remained in the room, the other went out. He came back shortly with a pile of rags and blankets which he threw in the middle of the floor.

"There's your bed," he said to Larry.

It was getting dusk, but Larry had no desire to go to sleep. He was too worried and anxious over his position and too full of wonder at what his mother and those on the *Leader* might think about him.

The two men left the room, locking the door after them, and Larry was left alone. He was more frightened than he cared to admit. He half wished the men would remain with him.

He went to the window and looked out again. There was nothing to be seen except a wide expanse of open lots, and there was not a house within hailing distance. The glass in the windows seemed unusually thick, and Larry thought that if he tried to break it he might be badly cut. Besides, smashing the pane would give as loud an alarm as the ringing of the electric bell.

Then, tired with his work, and worn out with anxiety, Larry threw himself down on the blankets, wondering what would happen on the morrow.

Meanwhile, Mr. Newton was waiting in vain for Larry's return. He had quite a bunch of copy ready for the last edition, and, when he knew it was nearly time to go to press, he went to a

telephone and asked what had become of the boy.

"Why, he hasn't been here since the third batch of stuff brought in," replied Mr. Emberg. "We thought you might have him up there. What's the trouble?"

Then Mr. Newton told how he had started Larry for the office with an important part of the story.

"He's been hurt in an accident," said Mr. Newton, "that's what's happened."

"Maybe be got tired of the work and left without notice," suggested the city editor over the wire.

"Larry's not that kind," spoke Mr. Newton firmly. "You'll see that something has happened to him. But say, let someone take the rest of this story over the wire, and I'll soon be in."

With grave wonder as to what had befallen Larry, Mr. Newton dictated the story of the strike and the bomb explosion. Then he took a car for the office, as the strikers had temporarily dispersed.

On the way down he thought of all sorts of conjectures. The most reasonable supposition was that Larry had met with an accident—been hit by a car or cab—knocked unconscious and hurried off to some hospital. Reaching the office Mr. Newton inquired from the police whether any such accident had happened. He was told there was none.

"That's queer," he muttered. If he had only known where Larry was he would have thought it more strange. "I must get out on this case myself. But first I'll go to Larry's home."

Mrs. Dexter, who was beginning to be a little worried over the non-appearance of her son, was more alarmed when Mr. Newton arrived. At first she thought the reporter had come to bring bad news, but she was soon told there had been no accident.

"Maybe a bad man took him off," said little James. "There's lots of 'em in New York."

"Well, I guess it isn't as bad as that," said Mr. Newton. "We'll find him, don't worry. He's probably lost his way, and maybe he doesn't like to ask, thinking he should be able to find it himself."

But, in his own mind, Mr. Newton was satisfied that Larry was not so foolish. He began to be alarmed. This alarm grew when, the next morning, no word had been received from the missing boy. Mrs. Dexter was sure he had been killed, and she worried so that Mr. Newton, who paid a second visit to the humble home, was afraid lest she should make herself ill.

"I'll find Larry for you!" he said. "I've found lots of missing people, and I'll get Larry!"

But, though he spoke confidently, Mr. Newton did not know where to begin. He made a report of the missing lad to the police, and a general

alarm was sent out. But there are so many of these in the course of the day, and so little attention is paid to a hunt for missing persons, in New York, that Mr. Newton had not much hope in this respect.

The reporter went back to where Larry had parted from him, and made careful inquiries. He found one or two who remembered having seen several boys, more or less like Larry, about the time he disappeared. But the bomb had exploded that same time, and the attention of everyone had centered on that.

CHAPTER XIX

LARRY'S MOVEMENTS

LARRY passed a restless night. He slept but little and frequently he got up to peer from the darkened window. Sometimes he heard voices in the next room, and he knew the men were on guard.

"I must keep up my courage," thought the boy, "someone will surely come for me. This is New York, and they have lots of police."

But Larry forgot that the very size of the city was a factor against his being found very soon.

Toward morning he fell into a doze and got a little sleep on the pile of blankets. He was awakened by one of the men coming into the room. The fellow had a plate of bread and butter and a cup of coffee.

"We ain't going to starve you," he said, in not an unkind tone. "We don't want to hurt you any, but we've got to protect ourselves."

Larry did not answer. He took the food, of which he was beginning to feel the need. The coffee warmed him and he felt better after drinking it.

"Remember now, no tricks," the man warned as he prepared to leave. "The windows are guarded."

Left to himself once more, Larry walked over to the window and examined it. As the man had said there were several wires near the casement, and they seemed to run into the next room.

"I don't believe it is an electric alarm at all," thought the boy. "What would they want of a burglar alarm on a window so far from the ground? I'm going to try and see, anyhow."

At first he thought he would raise the window and see if the men rushed in.

"No, I have a better plan," said Larry after a moment's thought.

He took from his pocket a bunch of string. He had not yet gotten over that habit he formed while in the country, for a boy there doesn't have as many chances to get cord as does a city chap, so they generally carry some with them.

Larry fastened one end of the cord to the lowest wire. Then, unwinding the string, Larry went to the farthest side of the room, pulling the twine taut after him.

"We'll see if the alarm goes off when I break the wire," he said. He knew burglar alarms were constructed on the principle that if one wire in the circuit was broken by the opening of a door or window, it would cause a bell to ring. He was now going to break the wire and see what

happened. He thought that by doing it at long distance, by means of the string, he could fool the men. If the bell did ring, and they rushed into the room he would be far away from the window, and they would wonder who had severed the copper conductor of electricity.

Larry was a little nervous over the outcome of the experiment. He did not just know what would happen, and he was somewhat afraid of what the men might do.

"Well, here goes," he said in a whisper.

He gave the cord a sudden jerk, his heart beating so fast and hard that he could almost hear it. He strained on the cord. It began to stretch and then, with a suddenness that startled him, it broke in the middle.

"That wire's pretty strong," thought the boy.

He repaired the break, went back to the far side of the room, and began to pull steadily on the cord. This time it held and, a few seconds later, with a sudden and loud snap the electric wire broke.

For a moment Larry stood in breathless anxiety, waiting to see what would happen. He half feared that, after all, the electric wire might lead to an alarm. But, as the seconds passed, and no one came, Larry realized that the men had been deceiving him. There was no burglar attachment to the window and he could raise it and not be discovered.

"I'd better wait until dusk, however," the boy thought. "They can't see me so well then."

Several times during the day the men came back to the room. The tall one brought Larry his dinner, but had little to say. The boy had tied the broken wire together, and removed the string, so that no evidences remained of what he had done.

He could tell, by the occasional conversation in the room next to him, that the men were still there, and he knew it would not do to try to escape while they were so close. His only hope was that they would go out. And this happened shortly after one of them had brought in a plate of sandwiches and a glass of milk for the prisoner.

Larry heard them going down the stairs, and the lad could hardly wait for them to get all the way down, so anxious was he to open the window.

Raising the sash proved a harder job than he anticipated and it was quite a feat for even his sturdy muscles. The window had evidently not been opened in some time, and stuck. At last, however, Larry raised it. It was a relief to breathe the fresh air, for the room had been close, but it was better to feel that he had now a chance to get away.

Looking cautiously forth from the window Larry could not see anyone. The ground below

was deserted. It was quite dusk now, and he resolved to make his attempt.

But now that he had the sash up and could look out, a new difficulty presented itself. This was the fact that the fire escape platform was three windows away from the one where Larry was. He did not see how he was to reach it. There was just one way, he figured, but it was so dangerous that he hesitated considerably about taking it.

This was to edge along on the window sills until he had reached the platform. Once there it would be easy to get to the ground. But the trip across would be risky.

Carefully Larry examined the ledges. They were broad and substantial, and by some chance of architecture the sill of one window nearly met that of the next. One would need to be very careful in edging along the narrow ledge. To a fireman the feat would probably have presented few difficulties, but to an untrained lad it was very great.

"I'm going to try," said Larry determinedly. "I must get away from here, now that I have the chance."

He crawled out on the ledge and looked down. Through the half-darkness he could make out the ground below and a feeling of dizziness caused him to reel.

"I mustn't do that again," he said to himself,

for he remembered the ill effects of looking down from great heights. "I must keep my eyes in front of me."

Carefully and cautiously he stood erect on the narrow ledge. He found that the window casings gave a fairly good hold for his fingers as he edged his way along. Then he began to travel over the dangerous path. He went a few inches at a time, feeling to make sure that each forward step was firm before trusting his whole weight on his foot.

Nearer and nearer he came to the fire escape platform. Now but five feet separated him, and a few seconds later he was able to leap down on it.

He felt that he had now fully regained his liberty, and with a feeling of thankfulness he began the descent of the iron ladders. Past the second and third floor windows he made his way and was on the last ladder when a voice from below cried:

"Stay where you are! If you come down any further I'll shoot!"

Caught! The men, Larry thought, had returned just as he was about to jump to the ground and run away. Three minutes more and he would have been safely off.

"I've caught you!" the voice went on. "You will go around trying to rob places, will you! Didn't think anyone would see you, I s'pose, but

I happened along, though I can't see what you could steal in that old factory."

By these words Larry knew he had been stopped by someone other than the two men. He looked down and saw a short stout figure, in the fast growing darkness, standing at the foot of the ladder.

"I'm not a burglar!" ventured Larry mildly.

"Bless my soul, it's a boy!" the voice went on. "Well, well, what is the world coming to when mere lads go out burglarizing!"

"I'm not a burglar," said Larry with some spirit.

"Don't tell stories, boy!" the man below said.

"I'm not."

"But can't I see that you are a burglar?"

"I'm escaping from this building," Larry went on.

"Of course, I can see that easy enough," the man said. "That's what all burglars want to do —escape. But I've caught you!"

"Well, I'm coming down," Larry continued. "If you think I'm a burglar you can take me to a police station."

Indeed Larry would have asked nothing better just then than to be taken before some friendly bluecoats.

"All right," the man continued. "But mind, don't try any tricks on me! I'm strong, and I'll tackle you if you start to fight."

"I won't fight," spoke Larry mildly.

Then he continued on down the ladder and finally reached the ground. He confronted the man, who thought he had effected an important capture. That individual was a mild appearing, short, stout old gentleman with white hair and whiskers. He looked at Larry as well as he could in the darkness.

"Stand still until I strike a match," he said. "I want to have a good look at you."

"You don't look like a very bad burglar," he said after a close examination. "But you never can tell nowadays about burglars. Some of the best looking are the worst thieves. You come along with me."

"We'd better hurry," said Larry, "or the two men might come back and catch me again."

"What two men?"

Thereupon the boy told his story briefly.

"Why, you astonish me!" the old gentlemen exclaimed. "To think that such things can go on in New York. I must write a letter to the papers about it to-morrow. Come along, young man. We'll find a policeman at once and he'll arrest the gang."

This was easier said than done, for the building where Larry had been held captive was in a lonely and unfrequented suburb of the city. The old gentleman, who seemed to have forgotten that Larry might possibly be a burglar, explained that

he had been taking a long walk, as was his custom, when he espied the boy descending the ladder. The two walked on for some time, more than a mile, in fact, before they saw, standing under a solitary gas light, a policeman.

CHAPTER XX

BACK AT WORK

"HERE's a case for you, officer!" exclaimed Mr. Randall, for the old gentleman had said that was his name.

"What sort of a case?" asked the policeman, continuing to munch some peanuts, the shells of which were scattered about him.

"A most extraordinary case!"

"All cases are alike to me," returned the blue coat calmly. "What is it?"

"This boy is a burglar I just captured, only he isn't a burglar at all, but he's kidnapped and I saved him!"

"What?" almost shouted the officer. "Are you crazy or am I?"

"I guess you and all the policemen in New York must be, to have such goings-on," said Mr. Randall. "This boy is kidnapped, I tell you."

"Kidnapped, is it?" murmured the officer; "wait a minute, I have some sort of a report about a kidnapped lad."

From his helmet the policeman drew out a paper. He began reading over a description of

a number of missing persons whom the police had been asked, by their relatives, to help locate. Larry's case having been reported by Mr. Newton, had, in the course of the routine, been related to every officer in the city, from their different station houses.

"Here we are," the policeman exclaimed. "Fox terrier, answers to the name—no, that's about a lost dog. Oh, this is it—Larry Dexter, fifteen years old, rather tall, blue eyes, brown hair, etc."

"That's me!" cried Larry. "How can I get home quickest?"

"Come with me," the officer said.

He led the way through a number of streets, until they came to a lonely trolley car that had reached the end of its route. Into this the officer, Larry, and the old gentleman got, and soon they were under full speed.

"I'll take you to the station house, so I can make a report of you having been found," said the officer, "and then you can go home. Well, this is a good piece of work."

"You don't think I'm a burglar now, do you?" asked Larry of Mr. Randall.

"No, no," said the old man hastily. "That was all a mistake."

"What's that about burglars?" asked the officer.

Whereupon Larry told how Mr. Randall had

mistaken him for a robber as he was escaping from the factory.

"We'll raid that place," said the policeman, "but I guess they'll skip out as soon as they find you're gone."

And this proved to be so. When, after Larry's arrival at the station, a note of his having been found was telephoned to police headquarters, a squad of bluecoats started for the old factory. They found it deserted.

"I suppose I can go home now?" said Larry, when he had complied with all formalities.

The sergeant behind the desk nodded and smiled at the lad.

"I'll take you," spoke Mr. Randall. "I don't want to see you kidnapped again before your mother has a chance to look at you."

He insisted on going all the way with the boy, and into the Dexters' rooms. Such excitement as there was when Larry burst in on them! Mrs. Dexter was in despair, and Mr. Newton, who was trying to comfort her with the hope that her son would soon be found, was not succeeding very well.

Mrs. Dexter threw her arms about Larry, and hugged him and kissed him as only a mother can. James and Mary capered about their brother and Lucy fairly cried for joy.

"Bless my soul! What a cold I have!" Mr. Randall said, blowing his nose with unnecessary

violence, and, under pretense of it, wiping the tears from his eyes, which flowed at the sight of Mrs. Dexter's joy. "Most extraordinary weather for colds I ever saw, isn't it?" appealing to Mr. Newton.

"It certainly is," agreed the reporter.

Larry had to tell his story all over again, and then Mr. Randall had to relate his share in it. Then Larry had to be told all that had happened since he was kidnapped, and the clock was striking midnight when they all got through.

"Do you think they'll ever arrest those men?" asked Mr. Randall of Mr. Newton.

"I hardly think so," was the answer. "They are probably far enough off now. Besides they were only tools in the hand of someone else. The real criminal is the well-dressed man Larry describes. We may be able to catch him."

"Young man, you're quite a hero," the old gentleman exclaimed suddenly, turning to Larry. "I wouldn't have climbed across those window sills for a pile of money."

"I wouldn't have done it for money, either," said Larry. "But I wanted to get away. Besides, it was dark and I couldn't see how far it was to fall if I had looked down, which I didn't dare do."

"I guess your picture'll be in the papers to-morrow," said Lucy to her brother.

"I think it would be better to keep all mention

of the details of the matter out of the press," said Mr. Newton. "That's a strange thing for a reporter to say, but this case is different, and concerns the *Leader* more than any other papers. The unions are fighting us, and we must fight them. We can do it best by keeping quiet in this case. I think I can manage so that little of this will get into the other papers.

"The police station you went to is in a lonely part of the city, and reporters are seldom sent there. The headquarters men will not bother much with the story, and beyond the mere fact that Larry has been found I think we will not go into details."

This plan was followed and the next day small items appeared in all the papers, to the effect that the missing boy was at home.

Larry went back to work that morning, and was warmly commended by Mr. Emberg for the manner in which he had acted.

"You not only get news, but you do what is even harder," said the city editor, smiling, "you make it."

Larry was a real hero in the eyes of the other copy boys, and he had to tell the story over at least a dozen times before they would be satisfied. The other reporters, also, were interested in hearing the details from Mr. Newton.

Larry was glad enough to be chasing copy again, for he remembered how, when shut up

alone in the room, he had feared he might never more have a chance at it.

The cab strike was over three days later, the strikers giving up. Mr. Newton tried to learn who was back of them, hoping thus to discover the man responsible for Larry's kidnapping, but he could not, though he got several clews that pointed to a certain person. However, proof was lacking, and without this the reporter could not proceed and cause an arrest.

Several days passed. Larry was kept busy, for there was plenty of news, and there was no lack of copy to run with, proofs to get, and other errands to do around the office. But Larry was getting to like it more and more, and was counting on the day coming when he could write a story.

He continued at night school. The first feeling of strangeness had worn off, and the classes had settled down to study. The boys, after the first night of fun and excitement, did not play any more tricks, and Larry found them easy to get on with.

He feared he would have more trouble with Peter Manton, but the latter did not come near him. He saw his old enemy occasionally, but, as they were in different classes they did not meet inside the school, and only once or twice outside, and in the company of crowds of other boys.

Larry was studying writing, arithmetic, read-

ing, and spelling. He also took history and geography, and these kept him busy enough. However, he was bright and quick, and the teacher complimented him on the progress he was making. He got permission to take his books to the office, and at odd moments he conned his lessons.

One night, as Larry was returning from the school, and going up the stairs that led to his home, he saw, standing in the hallway, beneath the gas jet that illuminated it, a short man, rather roughly dressed. The stranger started on seeing the boy, and went quickly into a room the door of which someone on the inside opened.

"I wonder what that means," Larry thought. "That apartment was vacant yesterday. I wonder if it's been rented. If it has I don't like the looks of the tenants. However, it's on the floor below us, so I don't suppose it makes much difference."

Larry asked his mother, before going to bed that night, if she knew anything about the people in the rooms below.

"I did not know they had been rented," said Mrs. Dexter.

"Maybe they are sneak thieves," said Larry. There had been a number of cases of late of men sneaking into tenement houses, and, while the people were temporarily away from their apartments, ransacking the places.

"I think I'll speak to the janitor about it," said Larry. "He'll know if they have rented the rooms or not."

The janitor lived in rooms in the basement, and Larry, after cautioning his mother to keep her door locked, went downstairs.

"Yes, I rented the rooms to three men, late this afternoon," the janitor told Larry. "They said they were bachelors and didn't have much furniture. I didn't like the looks of the fellows, but I couldn't say anything, as they paid cash in advance."

"Did they move their stuff in?" asked Larry.

"Not that I saw," replied the janitor. "If they did they must have brought it in hand satchels, for there have been no trucks bringing any furniture."

"Some of them are in the rooms now," Larry went on.

"They are, eh!" spoke the janitor. "I don't like that, but I s'pose they've got a right to go in and out when they please, even if they haven't any furniture. Maybe they're looking the rooms over. It looks suspicious. I guess they'll bear watching."

"I think so myself," replied Larry, as he went back upstairs.

CHAPTER XXI

LARRY ON THE WATCH

As he passed the door of the room which he had seen the stranger enter Larry paused. He saw a light under the portal where there was a crack between the sill and the edge of the door. He also heard voices in low conversation.

"I'd like to know what you're up to," thought the boy. "I'll bet it's no good, from the looks of that one chap."

Larry noticed that the room occupied by the men was directly under his own bedroom.

"Maybe I can hear something from my room," Larry thought.

He returned to his mother's apartments to tell her what the janitor had said. He did not mention his own suspicions, for he did not want to cause any unnecessary alarm. When the others had retired that night Larry got out of bed, lay down on the floor of his room, and pressed his ear to the boards. At first he could distinguish nothing.

Then he heard a low, curious humming sound, like the roar of a railroad train going through a tunnel, only much fainter. Now and then he

could hear blows struck as though the men were pounding a hammer on a block of wood. Occasionally he could distinguish the sound of voices, though the words were a mere jumble.

"They're not ordinary lodgers, at any rate," the boy thought.

He decided it was useless to listen any more, so he got into bed. He wished he had a hole or opening from his room to the one below, that he might see what was going on, and he fell into a doze with half a determination to make an aperture.

Larry's duties at the office the next day kept him very busy. There was a big fire uptown and several murders and suicides. In fact it was a "great day for news," as Mr. Emberg put it. Everyone was busy, from the reporters to the managing editor. There was much copy to carry, scores of extra proofs to bring from the composing room, and enough to keep Larry running so often that by the time afternoon came he was very tired.

He did not feel very much like going to night school when evening came, but he thought that if he did not he might fall behind in his studies, and this he did not want to do. So he made up his mind he would go to his class.

Coming home, as Larry was passing through the almost deserted streets in the neighborhood of the school, he heard loud shouts. He thought

someone might be chasing a thief, but a few seconds later he heard the cry:

"Fire! Fire! Fire!"

Larry looked around. He saw a man running toward him. Back of him there was a lurid glow in the sky and a cloud of black smoke was rising.

"Pull the box!" the man cried to Larry, at the same time pointing to a red one halfway down the block.

"All right!" shouted Larry. "I will!"

He saw that the man, who was quite fat, was hardly able to run any further. The boy speeded off to the box. The key was in the door, and the next instant Larry had yanked it open and pulled down the hook. This was sufficient to set the mechanism inside the box at work, and send the signal to fire headquarters. Thence it was repeated to every engine and hook-and-ladder apparatus that was to answer, and, almost before Larry could run back to where he had seen the blaze, he heard the rattle of the steamers as they dashed up, the clanging of bells, the tooting of whistles, the ringing of the horses' iron-shod feet on the stones, and the hoarse shouts of men.

The blaze proved to be a bad one in a big warehouse. Quite a crowd gathered and Larry stayed to watch the sights. He felt that his mother would not worry if he did not come right home from school, as she had often told him he could remain out until ten o'clock if he so desired.

Soon the streets were filled with trucks and steamers and several streams of water were spouting out on the blaze. With fascinated eyes Larry watched the men at work. He saw a number of reporters for the morning papers chasing here and there.

Though the blaze was a bad one it had been taken in time, thanks to the prompt pulling of the box, and so the firemen after considerable hard work succeeded in getting control of the fire. Thinking he had seen enough, though he would have liked to remain until the finish, Larry started for home.

Pretty soon he left the crowd behind him, and entered a quiet street. In fact it was so quiet that Larry soon became aware that some person was walking behind him. He could hear the echo of the footsteps after his own, and, naturally, he turned to see who was following him. He could just make out the dark figure of a man.

At first the boy was a little nervous, fearing someone might be dogging him for no good purpose. He had heard that men would commit robbery for a small sum, and, though he only had a little change in his pockets, he was a little afraid that the man had an object in keeping so closely behind him.

"I wish I'd meet a policeman," thought Larry.

But, like many other things, officers are not on hand when you want one most.

"I wish I could see who it is," murmured the boy.

He turned around again, and caught sight of the man just as the latter came under a street lamp. Larry gave a start.

"It's the man who has the rooms under us!" said Larry. "He isn't following me; he's just going home, the same as I am."

He felt a sense of relief at this and quickened his pace. He turned a corner, near a dark building, where the shadows were gloomy, and, as he did so, a man stepped from the doorway.

"Is that you?" the stranger asked in a low tone. Larry did not know what to reply. At that moment the man caught a glimpse of him, and muttering a hasty "Beg pardon," he slunk back into the darkness. Larry hurried on, and, a few seconds later, looking back, he saw the man again come from the shadows and join the fellow who lived below the Dexter apartments, and who had been following our hero.

"Two of 'em," murmured the boy. "I think they must be up to something, but I hope they're not after me."

Almost unconsciously Larry quickened his pace, and a little later he found himself at the apartment house where he lived. The men were nowhere in sight, and Larry concluded they had either delayed on the road or else that he had walked much faster than they had.

No one was up as he let himself into the small flat with his latchkey. His mother called to him from her bedroom to tell him there were some crackers and milk in the cupboard, as Larry was often hungry when he came in.

"And look out for tacks in your room, Larry," his mother went on. "I took the carpet up in there to-day to clean it."

"All right, mother," replied the boy.

He ate a light lunch, and prepared for bed. He heard the persons living on the floor below enter their apartment, and then began that curious roaring sound again.

"I'd like to know what that is," Larry murmured to himself. "It's queer they should be carrying on some sort of business and only at night."

He went on into his bedroom, thinking over the problem. He was recalled to earth very suddenly as, in his bare feet, he stepped on a loose tack.

"Ouch!" the boy exclaimed in a whisper as he grabbed his wounded toe in his hand. "I forgot about the carpet being up. Hello! What's that?"

His attention was attracted from the pain of his foot to a streak of light on the floor of the room. It showed plainly, now that the carpet was up and the room in darkness, for Larry did not need a lamp to undress by.

"That comes from the room below—the room

where the strange men are," thought Larry. "There must be a hole in the plaster of the ceiling right under where the hole in my floor is. That's the reason the light shines through. I wonder if I can see down."

For an instant Larry hesitated. He did not like the idea of spying on people, but, in this case, he felt that he was justified. There was something suspicious about the men. The janitor had said they had brought no furniture, yet they were constantly in the place at night, and often during the day.

True, their business might be legitimate and honest, but the indications were to the contrary, and Larry felt that he owed it to his mother and himself to see that there was no harm in what the men were doing.

So the boy kneeled down on the bare floor, and put his eye to the crack. At first he could make out nothing, as the space between the boards in the floor of his room was so small that little of what was going on in the room down below showed. Larry soon fixed this, however, by softly cutting away a portion of the board. The hole in the plaster of the ceiling on the room below was big enough to disclose considerable.

When he had the hole made larger, Larry again applied his eye. This time what he saw startled him.

There, just below him, and seeming quite close,

by reason of a bright light, were three men. One of them Larry recognized as the man he had so frequently seen, and the same one who had followed him that evening. All three were in their shirt sleeves and seemed to be working hard. They hurried back and forth, carrying something in small pots over to a long table. All the while came that curious roaring sound.

Larry wiggled around until he had found a spot where he could get the best view of all that was going on in the apartment below. Suddenly there came the sound of a slight explosion.

"Turn off the gas! It's getting too hot!" Larry heard one of the men exclaim.

He kept a close watch. He saw one of the men dart forward. Then the fellow came to a stop in front of a small gray object. He seemed to pull open a little door and, all at once, the room was flooded with a golden glow of a small gas furnace, the brick lining of which was at white heat.

The men pulled something from the interior of the furnace with a long-handled affair like a rake.

"Get ready to pour," he heard one man say.

"I guess they're nothing but chemists," thought Larry. "They probably have a new invention, and want to get it in working order secretly to keep it from other people. I guess there's no mystery about this." But Larry did not know what the next development was to be.

CHAPTER XXII

TRAPPING A THIEF

As he watched he heard the men moving quickly about in the room below. Then a brighter glow suffused the apartment and Larry, looking through the crack, saw that one man had what seemed to be an iron pot filled with a gleaming mass.

"Steady now!" said someone in a low tone.

Larry was all impatience to observe what would come next. He strained his eyes to see better. He drew himself along the floor.

This last move was an unfortunate one. Larry's foot scraped along on the bare boards and his hand moved a chair slightly. In the silence it sounded quite loud.

"What's that?" the boy heard one of the men ask.

"I don't know," was the reply.

"We'd better cut it out, for to-night," said another. "I believe someone is watching us."

"Nonsense! who can it be?" remarked a voice.

"I don't know, but I have a feeling that we are being observed. Besides, there are some persons

in this house who I firmly believe are suspicious of us."

"You're getting nervous, old man," was the remark of one who, from the peculiar voice, had not before spoken. "But perhaps we had better stop work for to-night."

Then the light died out, and Larry could see no more. He could hear the men moving about, but, in a few minutes it all became quiet, and there were no further sounds from below.

"I wonder what they can be up to, that they don't want anyone to see; that they are afraid of having known," mused Larry.

Puzzling over these things, Larry finally went to bed. He could not get to sleep for some time, thinking over what he had seen. He wondered if he ought to tell Mr. Newton or someone about the matter, and half resolved to inform his reporter friend of what had taken place. Then he recollected that he had no proof of anything wrong, and he realized that to make charges without this, or even a good idea of what the men were up to, would be foolish.

"I'll say nothing about it," thought Larry, "but I'll keep my eyes open. I'm glad there's a crack in my floor."

Then he fell asleep, to dream that he had been captured by the men on the floor below, who were about to cast him into a fiery furnace for spying on them. He thought they grasped him by his

head and his heels and were swinging him to cast him into the flames, when he woke up to find his mother shaking him and saying:

"Come, come, Larry. It's almost breakfast time. You've overslept yourself."

He got up with a jump and began dressing, glad enough that he was not going to be burned to death. He ate his breakfast in a hurry and had to run downstairs and halfway to the car, for fear of being behindhand.

However, he reached the office just in time. He had to put in another busy day. In the afternoon he was sent to a hall uptown, where a meeting was in progress and where one of the *Leader* reporters was on an assignment. Larry had to bring back some copy, but as the meeting was not very important only one trip was necessary.

The car Larry rode on in coming back to the office was quite crowded, and he stood on the rear platform. Near him were several rather flashily dressed young men, who were laughing and joking in loud tones. Occasionally they would playfully shove one another.

At first Larry paid no attention to them, but finally he noticed that the young men seemed to be directing their attentions to an elderly gentleman who stood in the corner, smoking a cigar. He was well dressed, and his vest was adorned with a heavy gold watch chain.

Suddenly one of the young men gave his com-

panion such a hard push as to send him violently against the elderly gentleman. The latter's face flushed.

"Can't you chaps stand up straight?" he demanded.

The one who had collided with him seemed to be unable to regain his balance for a moment, and leaned heavily against the old man. Finally, however, he straightened up. Then, turning to the elderly gentleman, and making a bow as he removed his hat he said:

"I humbly beg your pardon, sir. I was not aware that I had hurt you. It was my companion's fault. I am sure he'll apologize also."

"Certainly, certainly," exclaimed the other somewhat flippantly. "It was all my fault, I do assure you, and I am very sorry."

"That's all right," said the elderly man, much mollified at the polite manner of the young men. "I suppose it was an accident. The car sometimes lurches considerably."

"No, no, it was not an accident, it was all my fault, and I insist on apologizing," went on the man who had first spoken. "I shall feel offended if you do not let me apologize."

All this while Larry noticed that the young man's hands seemed to be busy in the neighborhood of the old gentleman's watch chain. His companion was crowding close to the latter, while a third man, who did not seem to be in company

of the other two, but who was apparently engaged in reading a newspaper, held the sheet close under the elderly man's chin.

"Then I'll accept your apology," the gentleman remarked, in good humor again.

"By Jove! This is my street!" the first young man exclaimed suddenly, as he made a jump from the still moving car.

"And mine also," remarked his companion.

Larry's suspicions were aroused, particularly as the two men had seemed to be handing something to the one who was so industriously reading the paper. Still he did not like to say anything, though he was almost certain that the men were pickpockets. He had heard Mr. Newton describe how such criminals worked on street cars.

Suddenly the elderly gentleman put his hand into his pocket and gave a cry:

"I've been robbed! Those fellows took my gold watch! I wondered what they were up to. Stop the car! I must chase them! My watch is worth five hundred dollars!"

He would have leaped from the now swiftly moving vehicle and given chase to the two thieves, who were now some distance away, had not Larry, who was watching, put out his hand to detain the old man.

"Wait until the car stops," said Larry, at the same time pulling the bell rope. "You'll be hurt if you jump off now."

"But the thieves will get away!" cried the man. "Police! Help!"

By this time the car was in an uproar, and the conductor and several passengers came running out on the back platform. At the same time the motorman, in response to the signal Larry had given, brought the electric car to a rather sudden stop.

"What's the matter?" asked the conductor.

"I've been robbed! I must chase the thieves!" panted the old gentleman.

"I'll help you!" exclaimed the man who had been reading the paper. "I saw which way they went!"

He started to leave the car, but Larry, who had a plan in mind, had no idea of letting this man, whom he supposed to be a companion of the pickpockets, escape so easily. So the boy slyly put out his foot, and, as the fellow was about to leap from the platform he tripped, and came down on his hands.

"Who did that?" he asked.

"I did," replied Larry.

"What for? I'd give you a good thrashing only I want to catch those thieves that took this old man's watch!"

By this time quite a crowd had gathered, and the man, as well as Larry and the old gentleman, were hemmed in. At the same time a policeman sauntered up to see what the trouble was, and

Larry felt that he could now put his plan into execution.

"I guess you won't have to chase the thieves very far," the boy said to the chap who had been reading the paper.

"Well, I like your impudence! What do you mean?" demanded the fellow.

"I think you know something about this robbery," spoke Larry boldly.

"I'll have you arrested for that!" exclaimed the fellow. "Here, officer, just hold this boy until to-morrow and I'll make a charge against him. I shouldn't be surprised if he took the watch himself. I'll be back in a little while."

"Just wait a minute," put in the man who had been robbed. "I don't believe this boy took my watch. You may know something of it. If you do not you'll not object to being searched."

"Search me? Well, I guess not!" the man cried. "I'm going to chase after those thieves."

"Not so fast, my gay bird," said the officer, coming up through the crowd. "Let's see what you have in your pocket, anyhow. I've seen you before. You hang out over on the Bowery."

With a quick motion the policeman put his hand in the fellow's outside coat pocket.

"I thought so!" exclaimed the officer.

He brought to light a gold watch and chain.

"That's mine!" cried the old gentleman. "You had it all the while, you thief!"

The pickpocket, seeing he was caught, said nothing. He made a sudden effort to dart through the crowd and get away, but the officer was too quick for him.

"No, you don't!" exclaimed the bluecoat. He blew his whistle and several other policemen came running up. They soon handcuffed the thief, and after telling Larry and the old gentleman to follow to the police station led their prisoner away.

"Will you come and be a witness?" asked the man who had been robbed, of Larry.

"Yes, sir, but first I have to take this copy to the *Leader* office."

"All right, my boy, run along. You have done me a good service to-day, and I'll not forget it. I prize that watch very highly. Here is my card," and he handed Larry a bit of pasteboard, which the boy was too confused to look at. "Come to the police station as soon as you can," said the old man as he prepared to follow the officers, who were being trailed by a big crowd of curious persons.

CHAPTER XXIII

BAD MONEY

LARRY was in such a hurry to get to the office with the copy, for he had been delayed some time, that he did not look at the card the elderly gentleman had given him until some time later, when he had explained the news to Mr. Emberg. The city editor sent a reporter to get the story from the police station.

"Who was the man whose watch they took?" asked Mr. Emberg.

"I forgot to look," replied Larry, pulling out the card and reading it. "He—was Dr. James Carrolton," he added.

"What?" cried Mr. Emberg.

Larry repeated his remark.

"Say, this is a big story!" exclaimed the city editor. "We must have a display on this. Dr. Carrolton robbed the second day he is in New York."

He hurried to the telephone, to call up the police station where he had sent the reporter, and, getting him on the wire, held a hurried conversation with him.

"You're always stumbling on big stories," said the city editor, coming back to where Larry stood, wondering what it was all about.

"How do you mean?"

"Don't you know who Dr. Carrolton is?"

Then a light dawned on Larry.

"Why—why," the boy began, "he's the great English surgeon on hip and spine diseases that we've had so many stories about, and he came over here to cure a millionaire's daughter."

"Of course," said Mr. Emberg with a laugh. "I think it will be a good thing for you, also."

"How?"

"Well, Dr. Carrolton is not only noted for his skill as a surgeon, but he is one of the most liberal men in the world. He appreciates whatever is done for him. The way you saved his watch from being stolen——"

"I didn't do that for pay!" exclaimed Larry.

"Of course not," resumed the city editor. "He knows you didn't. But that need not stop him from rewarding you. You're a lucky boy. He may give you a hundred dollars."

"I don't want it," spoke Larry suddenly.

"What's that! Let me tell you, a hundred dollars is not to be sneezed at."

"I'd rather he'd cure my sister," said the boy.

"Your sister?"

"Yes, she has a spine disease, just like some of those persons Dr. Carrolton has cured."

"Perhaps he will cure her," said Mr. Emberg. "Only if he does it will be worth several thousand dollars, for he charges big fees."

"If I had the money no fee would be too big if my sister could be cured," said Larry, blinking to keep back the tears.

"If you get a chance, speak to him about it," said Mr. Emberg. "Great men are apt to overlook little things like a fee."

"Shall I go to the police station now?" asked Larry, as he remembered that the physician had told him to be present.

"Perhaps you had better," said the city editor. "Don't be afraid to speak up, and tell what you know about the case."

But there was no need of Larry's testimony. The police magistrate, after hearing the story of the officer and the physician, decided to hold the prisoner for the grand jury. Larry, who was on hand, was told to be at the courthouse when he was sent for. So he did not have to give any testimony.

As he was passing out of the courtroom with a number of other persons, Larry was spied by Dr. Carrolton.

"Hi, boy!" the physician exclaimed. "Don't forget to come and see me. That was a valuable watch you saved for me!"

"I'll come," promised Larry, anxious to escape from the gathering crowd.

Larry watched the famous physician enter a big automobile and dart up the street in the care of several friends who had come to court, as soon as they heard the news of his plight. Then the boy left the police station and made his way home, as there was no further need of his services at the newspaper office that afternoon.

"I wonder if I could get him to doctor Lucy," thought Larry. "If I could, and she should be cured, I'd be the happiest boy in New York. If I get a chance I'll surely speak to Dr. Carrolton about it."

When Larry got home that evening he found his mother in much distress. She had just been out to the store to make a few purchases, and, returning, still had her hat on.

"What's the matter?" asked Larry, as he saw by his mother's face that something was wrong.

"The groceryman said I had tried to pass bad money on him!" exclaimed Mrs. Dexter.

"What kind?" asked Larry.

"A half-dollar."

"Tell me about it, mother."

"I had considerable change in my pocketbook," went on Mrs. Dexter. "I went out to get a small steak for supper and, when I came to pay the man where we deal, who sells meat as well as groceries, I thought I had a bill to give him. Instead the largest piece of money I could find was a half-dollar.

"I gave it to the clerk and he took it to the desk. In a little while he came back and said the money was not good. I insisted that it was, but he said he would call in a policeman to prove it. Then, rather than have a scene, I said I would pay some other money, and I did so."

"Where is the money he said was bad?" asked Larry.

"Here," said his mother, taking a coin from her pocketbook and giving it to Larry. The boy looked at the half-dollar. It seemed bright and shiny, and had a good ring to it.

"That seems good," said Larry. "Maybe the man in the store was too particular."

"He asked the advice of several other men before he said the money was no good," said Mrs. Dexter. "So I'm afraid he is right."

"It's too bad," said Larry. "We work hard enough for our money and it ought to be good when we get it."

"The man said there had been a number of counterfeit pieces in circulation of late," went on Mrs. Dexter. "That's why they have to be so careful."

"But this don't look like a counterfeit," spoke Larry. "I've seen several of that kind which the reporters have, and all of them are worse than this."

"Well, the man wouldn't take it, so I guess it's no good," said the woman.

"Where did you get it?" asked Larry. "Perhaps that might give us a clew."

"I got it in a peculiar way," replied Larry's mother. "Yesterday one of the men on the floor below us asked me for some change. He said he had a large bill and wanted very much to get it broken. I had no spare change and I told him so.

"Then the man asked me to give him what I had, and he gave me a ten-dollar bill as security. He asked me to go out and get that changed, which I did. When I came back he said he had got the change in the meanwhile from someone else in the house. So there was no necessity for me giving him any. He paid me what money was due me, and, among the other pieces, was this half-dollar."

"I'll soon see if it's good," said Larry, taking the coin. "I'll go around with it to some big place, and they'll soon let me know whether it is counterfeit or not."

Larry took the money and went to a near-by pawnshop, the proprietor of which he had done a favor for some time since. The man was a German Hebrew, and was well acquainted with gold and silver.

"Is that good?" asked Larry, laying the coin down on the counter.

"For why you vant to know?" asked the pawnbroker with a smile. He was always careful

what he said and nearly always asked a question before he answered one.

"Someone gave it to my mother, and the storekeeper said it was a bad piece," replied Larry anxiously.

"Vich storekeeper?"

"Mr. Smith on the corner."

"And he said it vas bad?"

"That's what he did," replied Larry. "But I'm in a hurry, Mr. Moses. Can you tell me what I want to know?"

"For sure I can, mein frient. I only vant to know vat I'm talking about."

He took the half-dollar, bit it between his teeth, and rang it on the counter. Then he took from a shelf a small bottle.

"I vill give it the acid test," he said.

"He dropped a small quantity of liquid on the coin. The metal seemed to boil where the acid touched it.

"Well?" asked Larry, rather anxiously.

"I vouldn't give you two cents on dis half-dollar," said the pawnbroker.

"Then it's bad?"

"Like a rotten egg!" exclaimed Mr. Moses. "Don't let your mudder take any more of 'em, mein frient."

"All right," replied Larry. "I'll tell her to be more careful in the future. I suppose we'll have to lose this money."

"Vere did you got it?" asked Mr. Moses with a cunning look.

"A man—" began Larry, and then he hesitated. He did not know what might come from the affair, and he thought it might be better to keep quiet about it for a while.

"Yes—yes!" exclaimed Mr. Moses eagerly.

"A man gave it to her," replied Larry, and then he went out of the pawnshop quickly to prevent the proprietor asking any more questions.

CHAPTER XXIV

A QUEER CAPTURE

MANY thoughts occupied Larry's mind. For some time he had been suspicious of the men on the floor below him. That they were up to no good seemed evident, yet he felt that it was wrong to say, without more proof, that they were up to something bad. They were seldom seen in the daytime, and, though they moved about rather lively at night, Larry could see nothing through the crack that he could say was criminal, or that would bring the men under the law.

Now, however, that the pawnbroker had told him the money one of the men had given Mrs. Dexter was bad, Larry began to have new suspicions.

They were hardly definite enough to warrant his speaking to anyone concerning them, so he resolved to keep a closer watch.

"Maybe they have friends who make counterfeit money," thought Larry, "and they are trying to dispose of it for them. Maybe—" then he stopped in his train of thought suddenly.

"I'll bet they're the counterfeiters themselves!"

he exclaimed. "That's what that strange light meant. That's what they were doing the night I watched them. They melt the metal up and pour it into moulds. Then they try to pass it off for good coins."

Larry was so excited by his idea that he walked faster than usual, and, the first thing he knew, he was nearly two blocks past his house. He retraced his steps, and found his mother awaiting his return.

"Well?" asked Mrs. Dexter, "is the money bad?"

"I'm afraid so," replied Larry.

"Then we'll have to lose it," said Mrs. Dexter. "I don't want to ask the man to take it back. He might say I got it somewhere else."

"That's right, mother," spoke Larry. "Say nothing about it to the man. If he offers you any more money, or asks for change, don't take any or give any."

"Why, Larry? What's the matter?"

"I can't say yet," replied the boy. "I've had my suspicions for some time, but I want to be sure. I'll speak to Mr. Newton about it."

That night Larry kept a close watch, through the crack in the floor, on the men below, but their place remained in darkness. None of them seemed to be at home, and Larry was wishing there was some way of getting into their apartments so he could see what they were making.

"Never mind, my chance may come yet," the boy thought, as he went to bed, to dream of being captured by a band of counterfeiters who were about to melt him into a big half-dollar to get rid of him, when he awoke with a start.

The sun was shining in his eyes through his window and it was time to get up and go to work. He found plenty of things to do at the office that day, and so had no chance to speak to Mr. Newton about the money matter. He was somewhat surprised to read an item in the paper bearing on the very subject that was uppermost in his mind.

There was an account of an investigation that the United States authorities had started, to discover the source whence a number of bad coins seemed to be circulating about New York.

A number of detectives had been detailed on the work of running the counterfeiters to earth, the article said, and, in the meanwhile, the public was cautioned to be careful what money was accepted in change. Bad half-dollars were especially numerous, it was stated.

Larry felt sure that the men, in the room below his, were the counterfeiters. He was confirmed in this belief that same day when he had gone on an errand for Mr. Emberg to police headquarters.

As he was standing in the main room, waiting for Mr. Newton, to whom he had been sent with a note, he saw two detectives, whom he knew by sight, talking earnestly together in a corner.

Larry did not want to listen to a private conversation, but he could not help overhearing what the men were saying. He caught the words, "counterfeiters," "bad half-dollars," and then the men mentioned the number of the house and the street where Larry lived.

"They're after the men below our apartment!" thought Larry. "Those men are counterfeiters, just as I suspected. This will make a fine story for the paper. I hope it will be a beat!"

He saw that the detectives were two who were in the habit of figuring rather prominently in the police reports of the papers. Larry recollected that Mr. Newton had once said that both the officers were not as good as some others who did not get half the publicity they deserved.

"And they're the same ones that treated Mr. Newton so mean on that robbery story," reflected Larry, referring to the officers in conversation. "They wouldn't give him the story. I wish they were not going to capture the counterfeiters. It's too good a job for them. They don't deserve it."

He hardly knew how to act. He knew he must not interfere with the course of the law, yet he would have been glad to see some other detectives, who were more friendly to the newspaper men than the two he heard conversing were, make the capture. Larry realized that to catch the counterfeiters would mean quite a feather in the caps of the officers.

That night Larry kept a closer watch than usual. He could not see enough to enable him to tell exactly what the men were doing, but he noticed the golden glow flood the apartment, and he knew the men were melting something, for he could hear them talking about whether or not it was hot enough.

The number of counterfeit coins continued to increase, and the government inspectors redoubled their efforts to land the gang they were convinced was working in New York.

One afternoon, as he was coming from the office, Larry was met in the hall, just outside the apartment of the men under suspicion, by one of them. The man regarded Larry for a few seconds and then said:

"Would you mind doing me a favor?"

"What is it?" asked Larry, thinking the man might want some more money changed. In such an event the lad was prepared to refuse. He did not propose to have bad coins passed on him.

"Will you come in here and give me your opinion?" asked the man, holding the door open.

For a few seconds Larry hesitated. He thought the man might be one of the counterfeiters who had discovered he was being watched and who had determined to capture the spy. In such an event Larry felt he would be safer on the outside.

Yet he had a boy's curiosity to see what was in

the room about which the men were so secretive. If he could get a look he felt it might help him to know what to do.

The man noticed Larry's hesitation.

"You needn't be afraid," the stranger remarked. "I know some of the neighbors regard us a little suspiciously, but our work is such that it has to be done where no one can see us."

"What do you want me to do?" asked Larry.

"Merely give us your opinion?" spoke the man. "We have an article we want you to look at and tell us if you think it is good, and will be generally acceptable."

Larry was just going to remark that he was not a very good judge of counterfeit money, when he happened to think that would not be a wise remark to make. He saw that the man held the door wide open. There did not seem to be any other persons in the apartment. Larry resolved to risk going in. He thought if the men attempted to harm him he could call loudly enough to bring help.

"We want to get the idea of a real American boy on the quality of the work we have done," the man went on. "Will you please come in?"

Then Larry resolved to enter. He nerved himself for an ordeal as he crossed the threshold.

"This way," remarked the man, preceding him, and, going into an inner room, Larry saw before him a pile of bright shining objects.

He gave a sudden start. The man noticed it and said quickly:

"Now don't say a word about it. We don't want anyone to know we are doing this. What do you think of them?"

Larry was much surprised at what he saw. He talked for some time with the man, and, when he emerged from the apartment, the boy's face bore a queer look.

"I must tell Mr. Newton about this," he said. "He will be glad to know of it, and then it will be a chance to do those detectives a turn."

Mr. Newton was much excited over what Larry told him next day.

"Are you sure Detectives Jones and Douglass are on the case?" he asked.

Larry told what he had overheard at police headquarters.

"Then I guess they are," remarked the reporter. "Well, this will be quite a surprise for them. It will kill two birds with one stone."

"What do you mean?" asked Larry.

"We'll get a story for the paper out of it and fool the officers besides."

"It will be a queer story," said Larry, and Mr. Newton nodded.

For several days after that, the men in the rooms below the Dexter apartment were busily engaged. Larry no longer kept watch of them. Instead he kept a careful lookout on persons who

loitered about in the street near the house. One evening at dusk he saw two rather poorly dressed men who walked up and down several times, and then ventured into the hallway of the house.

"I guess they are the detectives in disguise," thought Larry. "It is almost time to spring the trap."

In accordance with an arrangement he had made he telephoned to Mr. Newton.

"So you think it's time, eh?" asked the reporter. "I'll come right over."

Mr. Newton joined Larry half an hour later, and the pair went to the boy's room, above where the strange men had been working for some time.

"Are they downstairs?" whispered Mr. Newton.

"Yes," said Larry, "and the detectives are hidden in a room across the hall. I guess they'll break in any minute now. We can hear them through the crack. I have made it bigger so we can see well."

Larry and the reporter knelt down and applied their eyes to the hole in the floor. They could observe the men moving about, and could see the golden glow that filled the apartment.

Suddenly, as they watched, they heard the sound of crashing wood.

"They are breaking in the door!" exclaimed Larry. "The detectives are after them!"

CHAPTER XXV

A BIG ROBBERY

"Now for some fun!" exclaimed Mr. Newton. "Those detectives will get the biggest surprise of their lives."

"Yes, and it will give you a chance to get back at them for the way they treated you," remarked Larry.

"There goes the door!" cried the reporter, as a louder crash betokened that the portal had given way. "This will bring everyone in the house out to see what is going on."

Following the crash there came a series of shrill cries from the apartment below.

"Come on down!" called Mr. Newton to Larry. "We can see better. Besides I want Jones and Douglass to notice that I'm on the job when they get fooled."

Larry and the reporter raced downstairs. They saw a number of other tenants in the building making their way toward the scene of the disturbance, and the stairway was well crowded.

"Here we go!" cried Mr. Newton as he passed through the burst-in door. "Come on, Larry!"

A strange sight met the gaze of the reporter. On the floor were two of the men who had been in the habit of working in the rooms. On top of each of them sat a detective; Jones on one and Douglass on the other. The men were trying to get up, but the detectives prevented them by holding their heads close to the floor.

In the corner was the third man, and in front of him was a third detective, who had a short club in his hand. Every now and again the detective would jab the man in the stomach with the billy, causing the man to double up like a jumping-jack.

"Keep still!" cried the detective.

"How can I when you keep tickling me with that club!" exclaimed the man.

"I don't care how you do it, only keep still!" the officer repeated, giving the man another jab. "We'll show you counterfeiters how to behave!"

"Counterfeiters?" the man repeated, apparently in great astonishment.

"Yes, counterfeiters. You can't fool us any longer. We've got you dead to rights. We'll seize your whole plant, and confiscate all the bad half-dollars you've been making. We've been watching you for some time. We know how you melt the metal up and then pour it into moulds!"

"Counterfeiters! You are crazy!" cried the man. "That boy there," pointing to Larry, whom

he just then saw, "he knows better than that. He knows what we make!"

"I guess you've made a mistake this time," remarked Mr. Newton, coming forward. "How are you, Jones, and you too, Douglass?"

"Um!" grunted the detectives, still sitting on their prisoners. "I guess we know a counterfeiting plant when we see one. You can't fool us!"

"Lift up that sheet," said the man in the corner, nodding to Larry to raise a cloth that covered a long table. The boy did so.

"That's what we've been making, out of melted lead!" the man in the corner went on, dodging another jab from the detective's club. "They're only toy soldiers for the holiday trade. We make them of old lead which we melt up, and then we color them. We didn't want the other manufacturers to know about it. It's getting near Christmas and we're making up an extra lot to sell on the streets. We're not counterfeiters. You've made a mistake. I asked Larry to come in the rooms the other day to get his opinion on whether or not they were good-looking soldiers, and he said they were fine ones; didn't you, Larry?" asked the man.

Larry nodded in assent. The detectives looked rather foolish. Someone in the crowd, that had gathered outside the door, began to laugh. Soon there were several titters.

"Would you mind letting me up now?" asked the man on whom Detective Jones was sitting.

"Me too," said the other prostrate one.

"Get up!" growled the detectives, much disgusted at the outcome of the affair.

They had expected to discover a counterfeiting plant and had only succeeded in unearthing an improvised toy shop. Larry's suspicions had been dispelled as soon as he entered the place, a few days previous, but he and Mr. Newton had decided to say nothing of this, as they wished to play a trick on the officers who had gone out of their way once to treat the reporter in rather a shabby fashion.

"This will make a good story," remarked Mr. Newton so the detectives would hear.

"You're not going to print this, are you?" asked the officers, looking more foolish than ever.

"Of course," replied the reporter. "It isn't often that you fellows make mistakes, but when you do it's only fair to tell of them. I'll make a good story out of it."

"We'll get even with you if you do," growled Jones. "We'll fix you for this."

"I'm only paying you for what you did to me some time ago," said Mr. Newton, as the detectives released their prisoners. The soldier-makers brushed the dirt from their clothes as the detectives left.

"I couldn't imagine what was up," said one of

the toy-men. "The first I knew those detectives burst the door in. I thought perhaps they were thieves, but when they threw us down and sat on us, I knew there must be something strange the matter. The idea to take us for counterfeiters!"

"I thought you were myself," said Larry, "especially when you gave my mother that bad fifty-cent piece."

"That's so, I nearly forgot about that," one of the men exclaimed. "That was an old pocket-piece of mine. I gave it to her by mistake. I will give her a good one for it right away."

"Here it is," Larry remarked, producing the bad coin, and receiving a good one.

"Now that the excitement is over I guess we can go on making lead soldiers," remarked the head workman, as he propped up the broken door and started the furnace.

"Yes, and we must get to work on the story," the reporter said.

"I wonder if the other papers will have it in the morning," came from Larry.

"Not much danger," replied Mr. Newton. "Jones and Douglass will keep very quiet about it, since they were fooled."

None of the morning sheets had an account of the affair, and that afternoon the *Leader* came out with a big display story, telling how the detectives, hoping for much credit from their performance, had planned to raid a counterfeiters'

den. Mr. Newton set forth in lively sentences how the officers had kept watch, and had, with a great show of authority, burst into the place, only to find that it was merely a temporary toy shop.

The story made a hit, and Mr. Emberg was warm in his praise of Mr. Newton and Larry as well. He said they had conducted the case well.

"You are doing good work, Larry," said the city editor. "Keep it up!"

Whereat Larry blushed like a girl, though he felt ashamed of it. However, he need not have been, for not a reporter on the paper, from the oldest down, but who would have liked to have had such a beat to his credit.

Larry went home to supper, and then prepared to attend night school. His mind was in such a whirl over the events of the day that he did what seldom happened to him; he missed in his lessons. The teacher, who had taken quite a notion to Larry, was much surprised, but Larry did not think it wise to tell what made him so careless. He promised to do better the next night.

When Larry reached the *Leader* office a few mornings later he found considerable confusion evident. A number of reporters were talking in one corner, and Mr. Newton was conversing with someone over the telephone in the enclosed booth.

"What's the matter?" asked Larry of Bud.

"Big robbery in some millionaire's house," replied Bud. "They just discovered it. None of

the morning papers have it. Lot of gold, silver, and diamonds taken."

"That'll be a good story," commented Larry.

A few minutes later Mr. Emberg came in. In a little while Mr. Newton had acquainted the city editor with the robbery, a "tip" concerning which had been received from police headquarters a short time before.

"It's Mr. Reynolds's house," said Mr. Newton. "The family slept late. Police think chloroform was used. They found the place ransacked, a small safe forced, and about twenty-five thousand dollars' worth of stuff taken, including the famous Reynolds diamonds."

"You'd better jump out on the story," said the city editor to Mr. Newton. "Do you want any help?"

"I don't know. I guess I can handle it alone. But I might take Larry along," he added in a lower tone. "There may be something he can do."

"All right," responded Mr. Emberg. "Get the story in early, and interview the people. Might get a picture of Mrs. Reynolds, and I'll send a photographer to take a snap of the house. Hurry up, now."

"Come along, Larry," said Mr. Newton. "We'll see if we can solve this mystery and recover the diamonds."

The two started off, followed by the rather

envious eyes of some of the other reporters. It was considered an honor to be assigned to cover a big story, though professional etiquette forbade any reporter from saying anything.

At the Reynolds house they found a number of policemen on guard, to keep away the curious persons that had gathered as soon as the robbery became known in the neighborhood. One of the bluecoats attempted to bar the progress of Larry and Mr. Newton.

"From the *Leader*," announced the reporter, as he nodded to another policeman whom he knew.

"It's all right, Jim," said the latter to the officer who had stopped Mr. Newton, whereat the reporter and Larry were allowed to enter the house. Inside they found a number of "plain clothes men," as detectives are sometimes called, from the fact that they wear no uniform.

"Hello, Patsy!" called Mr. Newton familiarly to a short, stout, bald-headed detective, "what sort of a job have you been letting 'em pull off on you now."

"Looks like a second-story one," replied the detective.

"No more a second-story one than you are," retorted another detective who stood near, making some notes in a book. "It's an inside job."

"Anyhow, the stuff's gone I s'pose," remarked Mr. Newton with a smile.

"Sure thing," replied the fat man.

"What's a second-story job?" asked Larry of his friend.

"The police call it that when the thief climbs up on the porch, or, in some way, enters the second-story windows."

"And what's an inside one?"

"That's where some of the servants in the house either take the valuables or help the thieves by letting them in, or by leaving a window conveniently open. But come on, we'll take a look for ourselves. It's all right, Patsy, I s'pose," went on Mr. Newton, speaking to the short detective.

"Sure, go ahead, investigate as much as you like," was the answer.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE MEN IN THE LOT

"Come ahead, Larry," said Mr. Newton.

"Will the people in the house let us?" asked the boy, to whom the idea of anyone going through a private residence in this free and easy fashion seemed strange.

"I guess they won't mind," replied the reporter. "You see we newspaper men have to go ahead and do things. If we waited every time for someone to give us permission we'd never get any stories."

"But maybe they'll stop us," objected Larry.

"You leave that to me," spoke Mr. Newton. "I'll make it all right if anyone objects."

With Larry following, he started upstairs, where, as one of the detectives had informed him, the thieves had made an entrance. As they were going up they were met by a well-dressed man.

"Here! Where are you going?" he asked.

"I'm a reporter from the *Leader*," said Mr. Newton. "I want to get a correct account of this robbery."

"We don't want any reporters in here," said the

man sharply. "We don't want this thing in the papers at all. You have no right in here. I order you out!"

Larry was beginning to get frightened. He had yet to see how a seasoned reporter meets a rebuff of this kind.

"I'm very sorry," began Mr. Newton in a smooth tone. "I'm sure the *Leader* doesn't want to annoy anyone. We are just as sorry as you are about this robbery, but we are only doing you a service."

"How doing us a service?" replied the man. "If you call blazing a lot of untruths about the matter all over, why I suppose it is."

"Pardon me," interposed Mr. Newton, "but the *Leader* is not a yellow journal. It does not publish fakes. It always tries to get at the truth. Sometimes, as in a case of this sort, where we are refused information, we have to get it from the next best source. Sometimes, I admit, we may be given the wrong information.

"But I'll tell you how we can help you. You want to recover the jewelry, of course?"

"Seeing that we are going to offer a reward for it you might guess so," replied the man sarcastically.

"So much the better," resumed Mr. Newton. "Now if we publish an account of the robbery in the paper, and give a description of the jewelry, it will aid you in recovering it."

"I don't see how."

"Because the *Leader* is read by a large number of persons. They will see an account of this; they will look over the list of jewelry stolen. Among others who will see it are pawnbrokers, to whom the thieves, it is most likely, will offer the stuff for sale."

"Well?"

"No one who reads an account of the crime and a description of the jewelry will be willing to lend any money on it. They will be on the look-out, and as soon as any of the stuff is offered them they will notify the police. Then the officers will come, arrest the men, and your jewelry will be recovered."

"Of course, I didn't think of that," said the man. "In that case perhaps we might give you an account of the affair."

"I think it would be best to," remarked Mr. Newton, with a wink at Larry.

"You may follow me," said the man who had at first objected to the reporter getting any information. "I'll show you where the thieves got in, and then I'll give you a list of the things that are missing."

Larry and Mr. Newton followed the man's lead. He took them through a long hall and to the rear of the house. He stopped at a small window over a porch and said:

"There's where they got in. At least so the

police think. There are marks on the window sill."

"So there are," observed Mr. Newton.

"The thieves evidently climbed up the porch pillars," said the man.

"I hardly think so," returned Mr. Newton.

"But the police say so," spoke the man.

"They're not always right," responded the reporter. "I would say they climbed that tree and, from the low branch dropped on the roof. Then they opened the window. You can see where the limb has been freshly broken and where leaves and twigs from the branch have fallen on the roof."

"That's so, I'd never have noticed that," said the man. "You ought to be a detective."

"I'd rather be a reporter," said Mr. Newton.

"Well, at any rate, they got in," went on Mr. Robertson, as he said his name was. "Then they proceeded to help themselves and they got considerable. Some of the officers think the thieves had help from the servants or else they would not have gotten in so easily."

"This was not an inside job," said Mr. Newton thoughtfully.

"What makes you think it wasn't?"

"Because if it was the thieves would not go to all the trouble of climbing a tree to drop on a roof, and then force a window. They would have it arranged so they could get in easily. This

was an outside job, and the servants knew nothing of it."

"I'm glad to hear you say so," said Mr. Robertson. "I would not like to think we have dishonest servants. Now, if you will come with me I will give you a list of what is missing."

With a much different manner from that with which he had greeted them Mr. Robertson led the way to a small study. There he gave Mr. Newton a list of all the stolen articles and their value.

"We think the men, or man, must have chloroformed us," Mr. Robertson added.

"Why so?"

"Because we all slept so late this morning. We all woke up drowsy and stupid, as if some drug had been used."

"Perhaps there was," said Mr. Newton. "It has been done before."

"Now don't write up too much," was Mr. Robertson's parting injunction.

"No more than is necessary," replied the reporter. "We'll have a true account and a description of the missing jewels."

Then, having secured all the information he wanted, Mr. Newton, beckoning Larry to follow him, went out of the house.

"I wish you'd go to police headquarters and get a list of the jewelry as the police have it," said Mr. Newton to Larry. "I want to compare it with the one Mr. Robertson gave me."

"Will they give it to me?" asked the boy.

"Just tell them I sent you and it will be all right," spoke Mr. Newton.

Larry accomplished his errand successfully, and reported back to the office of the *Leader*, where Mr. Newton had said he would meet him. Larry's list was somewhat different from that furnished by the family, as the people had not told the police all of their loss.

Mr. Newton made a good story of the big robbery. He gave a picturesque account of how the family awoke, to find themselves in a stupor, and how, finally, they were roused up and discovered the big robbery.

Then there was a picture of the robbed house, and several views of the celebrated Reynolds diamonds, as well as cuts of the more prominent members of the family. Altogether it made a stirring story, and Larry wished he could have taken a more active part than he did. However, he consoled himself with the reflection that, some day, he might be a real reporter.

No other paper had as good an account as did the *Leader*, which statement Mr. Emberg made after the first edition came out.

"You and Larry deserve credit," said the city editor to Mr. Newton.

"I didn't do much," said Larry.

"You helped all right," put in Mr. Newton. "You did all right."

The Reynolds story was the biggest one of the day and there was enough news in it to carry it on the front page of most of the papers for two succeeding days. There seemed to be no clew to the thieves, though all the detectives were working on the case.

One thing was certain, the jewels, which formed the largest part of the booty, were gone. They were more prized than anything else that was taken, according to the family, and a reward of one thousand dollars was offered for their return.

A most careful supervision of all the pawnshops in New York and the immediate vicinity showed that the diamonds and other precious stones had not been pledged.

"The thieves are hiding them until this trouble blows over," said Mr. Newton.

"Whereabouts do you suppose they have put them?" asked Larry.

"I don't know. If I did I'd go there and get the stuff and claim the reward," answered the reporter.

For several days little was talked of but the robbery. Then other, newer, and more important news of various kinds came in, and the theft was, for the time being, forgotten.

One night, when Larry was coming from evening school, he took a short cut. It was through a broad field on which had stood a large ware-

house, but which had been burned, leaving a sort of hole in the ground, filled with rubbish.

As Larry was picking his way through this, for it was a dark and rainy night, he thought he saw, off to the left, a moving light.

"I wonder what that can be," he thought.

He looked at the tiny flame, and saw that it had now ceased its motion.

"Guess I'd better take a look," he said. "You never can tell what's going to happen."

He walked cautiously toward the glow. As he drew nearer Larry saw that there were several men grouped about a lantern that stood on the ground.

"About here'll do," one man said in a low tone.

"Anywhere so's we can find it again," joined in another voice.

Then Larry could hear the sound of picks and shovels striking the ground.

"I wonder what's up?" he asked himself.

CHAPTER XXVII

LARRY IS REWARDED

WALKING softly Larry approached closer to where the men were at work He could not see what they were doing, except that they were making a hole in the ground. One man stood a little distance back from the others and held what seemed to be a small box in his arms.

"Maybe there's been a murder committed and they're burying the corpse," thought Larry. Then he laughed at his thought. The box the man had would hardly hold a dead cat.

The men were working fast now, and seemed anxious to get through.

"That's deep enough," said one. "Get a flat stone to put on top."

In his curiosity Larry forgot the caution he had hitherto used. His foot touched a piece of wood, dislodged it, and rattled it against a stone. It made quite a noise.

"What's that?" exclaimed the man with the box.

"Someone's coming," replied the one with the pick.

"I'll see what it is," the third man said, as he started toward Larry. But the boy did not wait to note what would happen when the man got to him. He sped off softly through the darkness, and when he saw a part of a wall just ahead of him he dropped down behind it. The man passed him on the run, but did not think of looking behind the masonry. After looking about him, as well as he could in the darkness, the man returned.

"What was it?" asked his companions.

"A cat or a dog, I guess," was the reply. "Nobody after us, anyhow. Go ahead and bury the stuff or, first thing we know, someone will spot us, and that would never do."

"They evidently don't want whatever they are doing known," thought Larry in his hiding place.

The men worked a little while longer, and then the boy could hear them throwing back the dirt and packing it down. Soon they finished and then, blowing out the light, they departed. Waiting a few minutes to be sure they were out of the way Larry crept cautiously over to where he judged the men had been digging.

But, in the darkness he could not find the place. It would have done him little good if he had, he thought, as he had nothing with which to throw out the dirt again.

He resolved, however, to come back the first chance he had next day, and see if there was anything mysterious in the actions of the three men.

In order to better locate the spot Larry took his handkerchief and weighted it down on the ground by a stone.

"This is somewhere near the place," the boy thought. "I guess I can easily find it in the daytime."

Then he went home. His mother and the others in the family had gone to bed, and Larry was glad of it, for he did not want to be questioned as to why he was so late coming from night school.

Larry hardly slept for wondering what the men had buried. He thought they might be hiding the evidences of some crime, and then again he reasoned that perhaps, after all, it might turn out to be nothing more than a pet dog or bird that had died.

"I'll find out though," Larry thought. "Don't I wish it was a big treasure like gold or diamonds! But it's foolish to think such things as that."

Larry thought the next day would never come to an end. Though he was very busy at his duties in the *Leader* office he kept watching the clock, for he had determined upon a plan of action.

He made up his mind he would go home as usual to supper, and prepare to go to his night class. On his way there he would purchase a small shovel at a nearby hardware store. This

he could conceal under his coat until he got to the lot, and he could then hide it under the fence. He also got a small lantern that burned a candle, and this he intended hiding with the shovel.

Once these two important things were hidden away Larry meant to walk across the lot just at dusk, before going to school, and see if he could not locate the place where the men had dug. If he could he would mark the spot more accurately with his handkerchief and then, coming home from his class, he could dig in the darkness and no one would be likely to observe him, as the spot was lonesome and people seldom went there except in daylight.

Larry's plan worked out well. He got the shovel and lantern and hid them under a fallen wall, in a convenient place. Then he strolled across the big field, just at nightfall, when it was difficult to distinguish forms fifty feet away. There was no moon and the sky was cloudy.

Larry pretended to be idly walking across the lot. Occasionally he would stoop, pick up a stone and cast it into the air, as boys have a habit of doing. He thought if anyone noticed him, they would not attach any importance to his presence.

He found his handkerchief where he had left it, but it was not near any place where the earth seemed to have been recently dug up.

"I guess I must be a little off the track," the boy thought. "Let's see. If I can find the wall I

hid behind, I think I can locate the place where the men were."

After looking about a little Larry found the fallen wall. He recalled that, as he had stooped down behind it he had seen, over the top, the spire of a church. And he recalled that the three men were in a direct line between the stone and the church steeple.

"Then if I walk out in a straight line from the stone, toward the church, I ought to come across the place," said Larry to himself.

Taking an observation from behind the stone he located the church spire. Then, walking as straight as possible, he passed out from the fallen wall.

"It ought to be about here," he said. As he spoke his foot sank down into a soft spot in the ground. Larry lighted the candle and flashed his lantern on the place.

"I'll bet's this is it," he remarked. "Anyway, I'll mark it."

He had prepared a short stake with a piece of white cloth on it as a guide, and this he stuck in the earth. Then he hurried from the lot to go to school.

It would have been better for Larry's lessons if he had not been thinking so much of what was buried in the lot. He did not pay proper attention to what was going on in the class. When he answered questions with statements such as that

Columbus was President of the United States, that Balboa discovered the Hudson River and that New York was the capital of Indian Territory, the teacher remarked:

"Well, Larry, I guess you are still dreaming. You had better wake up."

The class laughed and Larry with an effort took his mind from what he was about to do. Then he made a better record in his studies for that evening.

When school was dismissed Larry did not stop, as he sometimes was in the habit of doing, to chat with his acquaintances. He hurried off to the lot. As he approached it he took a careful observation. There was no one in the big field, which seemed dark, gloomy, and lonesome to the boy.

He had half a mind to give the whole thing up. He was afraid he would discover nothing and would have his trouble for his pains. Then, too, he thought, if there should be something buried there, and the men came along and discovered him, they might harm him.

"Well, there's nothing like trying," he reasoned.

Then he crawled under the fence, got his spade and lantern, and walked to where he had placed the marking stake. It had not been disturbed. Larry lighted the candle in the lantern, and, placing it where it would throw an illumination on the spot to be dug up, and would not be likely to

be seen from the street, the boy stuck the spade into the ground.

It was not easy digging, and before he had gone down two feet his back began to ache. The men had packed the lower layers of dirt in quite hard, and there were many small stones encountered.

With a strong shove from his foot Larry sent the spade down quite a distance. The sharp edge struck something unyielding and stopped. Pushing with all his force, Larry could not get it beyond the obstruction.

"Maybe that's the stone they put on top of whatever they buried," the boy thought. "I must be getting close now."

He enlarged the hole, so as to get his spade under the edge of the obstruction. When he had done this he placed a corner of his shovel under the edge of the stone, and pried upward with all his strength.

Slowly the flat stone began to move. It pried the dirt up with it, and the boy was almost trembling in his eagerness. Then, with a suddenness that sent him sprawling on his back, the stone flew out of the hole, and a shower of dirt fell on Larry.

He scrambled to his feet and looked into the hole. At the bottom he could see, in the dim light of the lantern, a small black box. He grabbed it up, and, only stopping to blow out the

candle, he ran at top speed, leaving the lantern and spade behind him. He wanted to get home as quickly as possible, and cast aside everything that could hinder him.

He never remembered how he passed through the various streets leading to the apartment. He seemed to be treading on air. Now and then a sickening dread would come to him that, perhaps after all, the box contained nothing of value.

"Is that you, Larry?" his mother asked from her bedroom as he entered.

"Yes, mother," he replied, in so strange a voice that Mrs. Dexter came out in a hurry to see what had happened. When she saw Larry, covered with dirt, his face pale, and holding in his arms the black box, she exclaimed:

"Are you hurt, Larry?"

"No," he answered, much excited. "But I want to find out what's in this box."

It was tied with several stout cords, which Larry cut with his knife. Then he wrenched off the cover. As he did so he almost leaped back in astonishment.

There, in the box, was a blazing pile of jewels. Diamonds there were, nearly a score, some loose, some set in rings, and, most beautiful, a large necklace of the sparkling stones. Then there were rubies, sapphires, and other precious jewels.

"Larry! Where in the world did you get them?" gasped his mother.

"I found them!" cried Larry, hardly able to speak, so great was his emotion. "Some men buried them in a lot and I dug them up!"

"But whose are they?"

"I'm not sure," replied the boy, "but I think they are part of the jewels stolen from Mr. Reynolds's house. If they are I'll get a reward of one thousand dollars!"

"Oh, Larry!"

By this time Lucy, who had been awakened from her sleep, had slipped on a dressing gown and entered the room.

"Those are the Reynolds diamonds!" she exclaimed. "That necklace is just like the one the paper had a picture of." She caught up the string of jewels that sparkled like fire in the lamplight.

"What are you going to do with them?" asked Mrs. Dexter.

"I think I'll let Mr. Newton know," said Larry. "He'll be able to advise me."

"How can you reach him?" asked Larry's mother.

"I can call him up on the telephone. He has one in his house. I'll ask him to come right over. This will be a big story for the paper."

Mr. Newton was somewhat surprised when Larry called him on the wire. He wanted to know what it was all about, but Larry did not think it wise to tell them over the 'phone.

"You'll see when you get here," he said. "It's a good story."

"Then I'll come at once," replied the reporter.

He was soon at Larry's house, and to say that he was surprised at the sight of the diamonds is putting it mildly.

"What will you do next, youngster?" he asked of Larry, with a laugh. "This is the biggest thing yet. Every detective in the city is wearing his eyes out looking for these, and here you stumble across them. Well, I should say it was a story!"

The reporter agreed to take charge of the jewels over night, as he had a safe at home.

"I suppose we ought to return them at once," he said, "but if we do the morning papers will have the story ahead of us, and that would never do. We must get a beat out of this."

And they did. The next day the *Leader* had a big story of the find, giving Larry due credit. It did not mention, however, that the boy was working for the paper. The story was held back until the last edition, and none of the other afternoon sheets had a line about it.

The jewels were taken to Mr. Reynolds, who, true to his promise, made out a check for one thousand dollars, which was given to Larry. It was a long while before the thieves were caught, and their capture was brought about in a peculiar manner.

"What will I ever do with the money?" Larry asked.

"Put it in the bank as the start for another thousand," said Mr. Newton.

"I have a better plan than that," replied the boy.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE RENOWNED DOCTOR

Larry's mother could scarcely believe the good news that the boy brought her when he showed the thousand-dollar check. It seemed almost like a dream to all of them, and several times Larry pinched himself to see if he would not wake up.

But the check remained firm, and, the next day at the suggestion of Mr. Newton, the lad deposited it in a savings bank, and received a book with his name on it, and one thousand dollars on the credit side.

"What are you going to do with it?" his mother asked Larry several times. "I hope you will not spend it foolishly."

"Don't worry," replied Larry. "I'm not going to spend it right away, but when I do it will be for something worth while," and he smiled over some pleasant thought.

Many persons, on receiving such a large sum, would, if they were as poor as the Dexters, have at once moved into a better house, bought a lot of new furniture, and begun to live better. But this

did not enter Larry's head, though his mother wondered if that was what his plan was.

She would have liked to have moved into a better house, though they were fairly well off where they were. True, they had not many articles of luxury, and sometimes their comforts were few. But Larry was now earning good wages, and, with what Mrs. Dexter got from her sewing, they had enough to eat, good substantial clothing, and did not need to worry over the coal supply, even though winter was coming on. But Larry was not yet ready to disclose his plans.

There was much wonder in the vicinity of the apartment where the Dexters lived over the fact that with so much money they did not move to better quarters, and several of their neighbors mentioned this.

"It's Larry's money," said Mrs. Dexter, in answer to these questions. "He can do what he likes with it, in reason. Of course I would not let him spend it foolishly, and I know he will not. When he gets ready he will let me know what he is going to do with it."

Then Mrs. Dexter would close the conversation, or turn it into some other channel. But the neighbors did not cease from wondering and talking.

At the office Larry was the envy of all the other boys, and not a few of the reporters.

"If I had that money I'd never work again," said Bud.

"It wouldn't last long if you began to spend it," said Larry. "I've got a special use for that thousand dollars."

That afternoon Mr. Newton had to go out on a story. As he was leaving the city room Mr. Emberg said:

"While you're out you might get a picture of Dr. Carrolton. We'll run it to-morrow, with the story of that big operation he's going to perform."

"I'm afraid I will not have time to go there," said Mr. Newton. "It's 'way uptown. Perhaps one of the boys or Larry could go."

"I guess Larry can get it all right," said the city editor. "I didn't think of him."

"Let him come part of the way with me," suggested Mr. Newton. "I'll tell him what to do."

So Larry was told to get on his hat and coat, give up carrying copy for the rest of the day, and go after a photograph of the celebrated doctor.

"Is he going to perform one of those operations on lame children?" asked Larry of Mr. Newton, as they were in the elevated train going uptown.

"Yes, he's going to try and cure a bad spinal trouble that a daughter of Mr. Smyington, the millionaire, is afflicted with," said the reporter. "He has been very successful in all the cases he

has undertaken, and he was brought over to this country especially to operate on this one case."

"It must cost a lot of money," said Larry.

"Mr. Smyington is paying ten thousand dollars," said Mr. Newton.

Larry said nothing, but he sighed in a way that made Mr. Newton wonder what the boy was worrying about.

"Ten thousand dollars," said Larry softly to himself. "That's an awful lot of money, and I have only one thousand."

"Here's where you get off and change cars," said Mr. Newton, after about half an hour's riding. "Just go right in the house where Dr. Carrolton is staying, and if any one asks you what you want, say you're from the *Leader*. The physician is partial to newspaper men and I guess you'll have little trouble getting a photograph."

Larry experienced no difficulty in reaching the rooms of the great doctor. But there he was met by a secretary, who seemed to be in bad temper.

"Tell your business by me," he said to Larry. "The doctor cannot bother mit every boy what comes along."

Larry explained his errand.

"Ach! No! No! The doctor will gif out no more photographs," said the secretary, who was a German. "He has alretty gif out ten thousand. You must go away!"

"But I was told to get a picture," persisted

Larry, who knew that it is part of a reporter's duty never to give up.

"Go away! Go away!" exclaimed the secretary.

"What's the trouble?" asked a voice, and, from an inner room came the great doctor himself. He was smiling kindly, and seemed good-natured.

"It is one pest of a newspaper poy," explained the secretary. "He must have a photograph."

"I want one for the *Leader*," broke in Larry.

"Ha! Who is this?" exclaimed the physician as he heard the sound of Larry's voice. "I seem to have seen you before, my boy."

"Yes, sir, I guess you did," replied Larry.

"Ha! I remember now, you are the boy who helped to catch the pickpocket that stole my watch," the doctor went on. "I was wondering why you never came to see me."

"I have been too busy," said Larry, which was the truth, though another reason was that he felt a little bashful about calling on the celebrated physician.

"Well, my boy, I owe you considerable for what you did. I prize that watch very highly. What can I do for you?"

"I would like to get your picture for the paper," spoke Larry. "The city editor told me to be sure and get it."

"And you shall have it," said Dr. Carrolton, in spite of the grumbling of the secretary. "Here

it is, and besides one for the paper I give you one for yourself," and the physician took two fine photographs from the mantle.

"They are the last you have, Herr Doctor," objected the secretary.

"Never mind, Emile," was the answer. "We can get more. I would do more than that for this boy."

"How—how much do you charge for operations?" blurted out Larry, with almost a gasp. It was what he had been nerving himself up to ever since he heard he was to see the doctor.

"Well, it all depends," replied the physician, thinking it might be a boy's curiosity that prompted the question. "I do nothing else but these operations, and so I have to charge more than other doctors do for ordinary cases. Mine are very complicated cures and it sometimes takes a long time to perfect them. So I have to charge high fees. But I try to make my charges in accordance with what people can pay."

"Could you do one for a thousand dollars?" asked Larry.

"I suppose so," said the physician with a smile at Larry's bluntness. "Why?"

"Because that's all I have," exclaimed the boy. "I got it as a reward for finding the Reynolds diamonds. My sister has spine disease and she suffers very much. I would give the thousand dollars if you could cure her, and then I could owe

the rest of the money to you and pay you when I earned it. Will you? Please, Dr. Carrolton, please cure my sister!"

"Tell me all about it," said the physician kindly, taking a chair and drawing up one for Larry. "Where is your sister?"

Then the boy told him all about Lucy, and how much pain she had, telling how patient she was. He related the experience with the diamonds and told about getting the thousand dollars.

"Please come and cure my sister," he ended up with. "I know I can't pay you what it is worth, but I'll work hard until I can make it up," and he paused to regard the doctor anxiously.

"I—er—ahem!" said the physician, who seemed to find it hard to proceed. "I don't want your money, my boy," he said at length.

"Isn't it enough?" asked Larry in a disappointed tone.

"It is far too much," replied Dr. Carrolton. "I have wanted to do something for you ever since you saved my watch for me. I would rather have lost ten thousand dollars than that watch, which I prize for the memories it brings. So you can consider me in your debt to a large amount. As for your sister, I will come and examine her."

"Thank you," exclaimed Larry.

"I don't say I can cure her," the physician went on, "but I will try, and, if I can, I will be only too

glad to do so in return for what you have done for me, also because I like you, and I am sure I shall like your sister, if she is anything like you."

"She's a lot better," said Larry, hardly knowing whether to laugh or cry.

"All right, I'll write you a letter soon, and tell you when I can come and see your sister. Now you had better run along, for the paper might want the picture," and, shaking hands with Larry, the great doctor went back to his room, while the boy, almost in a daze over his good fortune, started back for the office.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE OPERATION

THE next day all the papers told of the impending operation on the millionaire's daughter by the distinguished surgeon. His picture was in many of the publications, including the *Leader*. The operation was performed that day, and was a success as far as the first stages went. It would be some time, the stories said, before the plaster casts could be removed, and then it would be known whether or not the little girl would ever walk again.

Larry read every line that was published about the eminent physician and the operation, for he felt that his sister's case might be similar to that of the millionaire's daughter. He said nothing at home of the hope he had that Lucy might be made well and strong, for he did not want to raise expectations that might later be dispelled. When he heard from Dr. Carrolton he thought that would be time enough to tell his mother, and to prepare Lucy for the operation and ordeal which she must go through.

There were anxious days of waiting for Larry.

As he performed his work at the *Leader* office he kept track, by means of the various papers, of Dr. Carrolton's progress. The physician was traveling over the country, making cures that were almost marvelous. Larry began to fear the doctor had forgotten his promise, and was almost beginning to despair when, one day, there came a letter addressed to "Mr. Larry Dexter," with his street number and all on it. Up in one corner was the eminent doctor's name.

Larry's fingers trembled so much he could scarcely open the envelope, but he managed to take out the single sheet of paper it contained and read this message:

"My Dear Boy: I have not forgotten you, your sister, or the promise I made. If nothing happens to prevent I shall call at your house a week from to-day and see the little girl. I hope I may be able to cure her."

Then Larry decided to tell his mother. At first Mrs. Dexter was too surprised to know what to say. Then, as the full realization of what the doctor's visit might mean,—the cure of her daughter,—she could not help weeping, but the tears were those of joy.

"Oh, Larry, Larry!" she exclaimed softly. "It is too good to be true!"

"We must break the news gently to Lucy," said

the boy. "We don't want to get her excited, for it might have a bad effect on her nerves."

Poor Lucy was frightened and pleased by turns when they told her. She had long before given up hope of ever being able to walk like other girls, and had resigned herself to her fate. Now that there seemed to be a ray of hope she hardly dared indulge in the pleasant thoughts that came to her.

"Oh, if I ever could walk right again!" she exclaimed, and her eyes filled with tears.

"Oh, Dr. Carrolton can cure you," said Larry with confidence in his tone. "I've read all about the cases in the papers, and most of them are lots worse than yours is."

"Oh, if I could only walk again, like other girls, and run and play, and—and go to work," sighed Lucy, "I would be the happiest girl in all the world."

"You will," said Larry, and he prayed that what he hoped would come to pass.

That week was full of excitement. In the first place, all unexpectedly, a trained nurse came to the house one day, and said she had been sent by Dr. Carrolton to prepare Lucy for the operation.

"Will I have to go to the hospital?" asked Lucy, with fright in her tone.

"No, dear," said the nurse. "Dr. Carrolton has decided that you will be better off at home. I am going to get you ready."

"Will you—will you stay with me when—when he operates?" asked the girl in a pleading tone.

"Of course I will, dearest," said the kind-hearted nurse, putting her arms around the girl. "Your mother will be here too, and we will take good care of you, never fear."

"Will it hurt very much?" asked Lucy.

"Not much, dear. It may, a little. Will you mind?"

"Not—if it makes me well," replied Lucy.

The Dexter household was much upset for the next few days. A room had to be prepared for Lucy, and this the trained nurse arranged. Then came a man, bringing a strange sort of folding table on which the little girl was to lie while the great doctor operated on her. Larry could hardly do his work for thinking of what was to happen, and Mrs. Dexter was so nervous that she did not know what to do.

But Lucy proved herself a brave girl. She was cheerful, and even joked at times, telling Larry she would soon be running races with him. The younger children did not know what was going on. Kind neighbors cared for them at times, when there was too much for Mrs. Dexter to do.

At last came the day for the operation; Dr. Carrolton came in his carriage, with another physician to help him. All save the nurse and the doctors were banished from the room where Lucy was taken.

Mr. Emberg, who had heard of what was going on, excused Larry from work that day, for he knew the copy boy's heart would be at home with his sister. Mrs. Dexter wept at times, and several women friends came in to comfort her.

There was an hour of anxious waiting. Then from the room where the operation had been performed came Dr. Carrolton.

"Will she—is it—can—" began Larry, but he was excited and stammered so he could not talk.

"We hope it will be a success," said the physician in kind tones. "It was a bad case. Much worse than I had supposed. But if we can make her walk again, Larry, my boy, if we can have her run around like other little girls, we'll do it!"

Larry gritted his teeth to keep back the tears that were all too ready to flow. But he put on a brave front.

"Thank you, doctor," was all he could say.

"Now she must be kept very quiet," the surgeon said. "The nurse will stay with her, but she must not be disturbed. I will stop in again this evening. Now good-bye, and don't worry."

He went out, followed by his assistant, leaving Larry in a sort of daze. The boy tiptoed to the sick room, and knelt down by the door. He tried to listen to hear what was going on inside, but there was a strange ringing in his ears that prevented him. Once he thought he heard his sister

groan, and this so frightened him that he ran away.

His mother, who had been cared for by the neighbors, who also looked after James and Mary, came back now, her eyes red from weeping. The nurse came out of the operating room.

"She's sleeping quietly," she said. "Everything is favorable. Don't worry. I think she will get well."

"Oh, I'm so glad!" exclaimed Mrs. Dexter.

Larry went outdoors. In the street he found quite a crowd of persons who lived in the apartment house, and who, having heard about the operation, were anxious to know how it had come out.

They were full of sympathy for the sick girl, and almost overwhelmed Larry with questions, several women surrounding him and wanting to know all about how "the poor dear child was coming on."

Larry told them as best he could. It would be some time, he said, before it would be known whether the operation was a success or not, but they hoped for the best.

"We'll all pray for her," said a motherly old German woman. "We want to see her runnin' about with the other children."

The days that followed were full of anxiety. The doctor came every day, bringing words of cheer and comfort. The nurse was very kind,

and the neighbors could not seem to do enough for the family.

Larry went back to work, as Dr. Carrolton told him there was no immediate danger nor chance of a change. Lucy had to wear a plaster cast for several weeks, and not until this could be taken off would it be known whether she was better. In the meanwhile they could only hope.

One afternoon, about two weeks later, when the last edition of the *Leader* was about to go to press, there came a telegram from a small village called Stoneville, about fifty miles from New York, to the effect that the rising waters, caused by a long period of rain, had so swollen the rivers and streams that a large dam, just above the town, threatened to break.

"If that goes there'll be lots of damage done, and maybe people killed," said Mr. Newton, who was in the office at the time.

"How do you know?" asked Mr. Emberg.

"Because I spent my vacation in that town once," replied the reporter. "It's in a valley surrounded by hills. The dam is at the upper end. It is used to make a reservoir for several large mills. If the dam breaks it's going to wipe out the village of Stoneville."

"Hum," said the city editor, in a thoughtful tone. "I guess we'd better cover that. You haven't anything special on now, have you, Newton?"

"No, I guess not."

"Then I think you had better go there. Start to-night, and wire us back all the stuff you can. Don't let the other fellows beat you."

"Not if I can help it."

"Perhaps you'd better take someone with you. I can send one of the men."

"If I take anyone I think I'd rather have Larry," said Mr. Newton. "He can run the copy to the telegraph office, he knows how to use the telephone, and he'll keep his ears and eyes open for news. Larry will do first-rate."

"Then you can take him," said the city editor. "I guess his sister is in no danger now. I'll find out."

Larry hardly knew what to say when the city editor proposed that he accompany Mr. Newton.

"I'd like to go," he said, "if I only knew——"

"I'll send you word about your sister every day," said Mr. Emberg, guessing what bothered Larry.

"Then I'll go," said the boy.

CHAPTER XXX

THE FLOOD

LARRY went home, all excited over the prospects of his trip. It was the biggest thing he had yet been assigned to do in newspaper work, and he felt that it might be the stepping stone to a larger field.

"You'll be careful now, won't you, Larry?" his mother pleaded as she packed a valise of clothes for him, since Mr. Emberg had said the trip would probably last several days.

"I will, mother," promised the boy.

"Write every day," Mrs. Dexter continued, "and let us know how you are getting on."

"Do you think Lucy will be all right?" asked Larry.

"I think so," said the nurse, who had come into the room. "Her general health is much better, though of course we cannot tell about the main thing; that is, whether she will walk again."

Larry went into the room to bid his sister goodbye. Lucy was stretched out in bed, her limbs and back held rigid by the heavy plaster cast. She smiled at her brother.

"So you're going to run away and leave me?" she said in a joking tone.

"I'll come back whenever you send for me," spoke Larry.

"When you come back perhaps I'll be walking around," said the girl with a smile.

Larry bade his mother, sisters, and brother, as well as the nurse, good-bye, and then went to the railroad station where he was to meet Mr. Newton. It was raining hard, as it had been for a week past.

"If this keeps up I'm afraid there'll be trouble at the dam," thought Larry, as he splashed through a big puddle.

He found the reporter waiting for him. Mr. Newton was attired in a long rain coat, and he had a big dress-suit case with him, that seemed well filled.

"Got any rubber boots?" he asked Larry, as soon as the latter greeted him.

"No. Why?"

"Because you'll need 'em if this sort of weather keeps up. You wait here and I'll go and buy you a pair. What size do you wear?"

"About six, I guess," replied Larry.

Mr. Newton hurried out and returned, bearing a bundle.

"There you are," said the reporter. "They'll keep your feet dry, anyhow."

A few minutes later their train was called and

the two went out on the long platform along which the cars stood.

"It's hardly worth while taking a sleeper," said Mr. Newton. "We'll get there about midnight, and I've wired for rooms at the only hotel in the village. Can't tell whether we'll get 'em, or not, the way things are."

It was a good deal like being a soldier, Larry thought, to be a reporter on a big paper. You never knew where you were going, nor when. At one minute you might be engaged in writing up a peaceful bit of news, and the next be sent far away to report raging floods or big fires. But Larry liked the excitement, and he felt that there was no finer or more responsible calling.

To be a reporter on a big paper meant to be able to command much power, which, if rightly used, proved of great value. A reporter is, in a way, his own master, serving only his paper.

Through the storm splashed the train. The wind howled around it and the rain beat upon it, but those inside were comfortable and warm.

Larry and Mr. Newton found seats together and they settled down into them, to listen to the roar of the storm, and the puffing of the engine until they came to their destination. Progress was slow, because the railroad line was not as safe as usual. Once they were delayed an hour by a lot of sand washing down on the track. The train crew had to get out and shovel it off.

Again they came to so sudden a stop that several of the passengers were thrown from their seats.

"We hit something that time," exclaimed Mr. Newton.

"Felt so," replied Larry.

Nearly everyone in the cars piled out in spite of the rain. Larry and Mr. Newton followed their example. They found that the locomotive had struck a big rock that had been loosened from a bluff by the rain, and had fallen down on the track. But for the fact that the engineer saw it in time, and put on brakes, there might have been a serious accident. As it was, the pilot of the locomotive was smashed.

There was a delay of two hours this time before the rock could be removed, and when the train at last got under way, and pulled into Stoneville, they were more than three hours behind time.

"It's after four o'clock," said Mr. Newton as he got off the coach and looked at his watch. "Hardly worth while to go to bed."

They found a number of people gathered at the station.

"What's going on?" asked Mr. Newton, of a man who was walking up and down the platform. "Everybody get up early to catch a train?"

"We haven't been to bed," was the answer. "The dam's liable to give way any minute, and

we're a sort of guard watch. As soon as she breaks there's a man up there near it, who's going to let us know by telegraph, so we can get our folks out of the way. There's a telegraph instrument in the depot here, and so we're hanging around for news. Say, but it's rainin' cats an' dogs, ain't it?"

"It certainly is," replied Mr. Newton. "Where's the hotel?"

"Right up that street," replied the man. "Guess you'll have trouble getting rooms, though. Lots of people have gone there for fear their houses 'll be washed away."

"Is it as bad as that?"

"Yes, and it'll be worse before many hours. The dam can't stand much longer."

Protecting themselves as best they could from the storm, Larry and Mr. Newton made their way to the hotel. As the man had said, they found it crowded, but a small room had been reserved for them on the strength of Mr. Newton's message.

"You'll have to put up with what you find," said the clerk of the hotel. "We're crowded for room, and we'll be more so shortly."

"We don't mind," spoke Mr. Newton. "We'll not be in very much, I guess. The most we'll want will be meals."

"I can promise you them at any rate," said the clerk.

They registered, and were shown to their room.

The rain was coming down harder than ever, but in spite of that Larry and his friend lay down and managed to get a few hours' sleep. After breakfast, which they ate in a crowded dining room, where the only conversation was about the rain and the danger from the dam, they donned their rain coats and rubber boots and, with umbrellas, went out.

"Will you tell us where the dam is?" asked Mr. Newton of the first man he met.

"Right straight up that street," was the answer. "Don't you hear a sort of roar?"

"Yes, what is it?" asked the reporter.

"The water coming through the emergency outlets," was the answer. "The flood has not yet risen above the dam, but it will soon."

Larry and his friend went in the direction pointed out. They were not the only ones on the street, for in spite of the downpour scores of persons were on their way to the dam, to see what had happened overnight.

As they came nearer the roar became louder, until as they turned down a side street leading to the river, they could hear the flood of waters tearing its way along like a miniature Niagara. Then, a few minutes later, they came in sight of the big reservoir, fed by a comparatively small stream in ordinary times, but which had now become a raging torrent from the overabundance of rain.

In front of them, in a sort of hollow of the hills, was a vast body of water. It was about half a mile wide, and backed up for several miles. The dam was about two thousand feet in length, strongly constructed. In ordinary seasons the water hardly came to within half-way of the top, but now only two feet separated the spill-way from the surface of the muddy swirling water.

In order to relieve the pressure on the big pile of stone and cement the men at the dam had opened three emergency outlets. These were big openings in the face of the dam, considerably below the top.

Through these the water was rushing with the strength of ten thousand horses. It spurted out in solid streams and shot into the bed of the stream below like a geyser. The little river, that ordinarily sufficed to carry off the overflow of water, was now a vast torrent and was rushing along with terrific speed.

Many houses were along its banks and some of these were already in danger of the flood. The water had reached nearly to the first floors, after flooding the cellars, and the people had deserted their homes.

"Well, I would say this was something of a flood," spoke Mr. Newton after looking the scene over. "There's going to be some news here or I'm mistaken. I must get to work and write a descriptive story."

"What can I do?" asked Larry.

"There'll be plenty of work for both of us, or I'll miss my guess. First you can find out where the nearest telegraph station is, and then make arrangements to send copy by wire."

"There's a telegraph in the railroad office," said Larry.

"That will hardly do for us. It is probably for railroad messages only. You must find a regular place, where they will take press copy. When you do, come back to the hotel and I'll meet you there."

After spending a little while looking at the river and reservoir Larry went on his errand. By inquiring he located a Western Union office, and made arrangements with the operator.

"Only I'll not guarantee anything," said the man in charge. "No telling when the wires may go down and out of business. I'll send stuff as long as I can, and then I'll have to quit."

CHAPTER XXXI

DAYS OF TERROR

LARRY went back to the hotel to report to Mr. Newton. He did not find him there, and so walked around in the corridor. The men were gathered in groups, talking of nothing but the storm and the danger.

"Worst I ever see in fifty years," said one old man. "I remember the year Deacon Stout's old gray mare died the waters riz so high they floated my barn, by gosh, but that wa'n't nothin' to this."

"She's goin' t' rage an' tear things apart," said his neighbor.

Other men were saying much the same thing. In one corner Larry saw a woman crying, while others were trying to comfort her.

"I can't help it," said the weeping one. "The waters washed away our house and we've lost everything we had in the world."

"Never mind, it's lucky you and the children were saved," spoke some of those about her.

"When did the house wash away?" asked Larry, thinking this might be some news for Mr. Newton to put in his story.

"A little while ago," replied one of the women. "It was down quite close to the river, and these people wouldn't move out when their neighbors did. They came near being drowned when the waters rose suddenly. Men had to rescue them in boats."

Larry asked several more questions, getting the name of the rescued ones, and the location of the house. He wrote the incident up as well as he could on some paper he procured from the hotel clerk.

"What's this?" asked Mr. Newton, when he came in half an hour later, and Larry handed him the sheets.

"Just a little something I picked up around the hotel, and thought might go in the story," replied the boy.

"Good for you!" exclaimed the reporter. "You're the kind of a helper to have. Did you arrange about the telegraph?"

Larry repeated what the operator had said, and then Mr. Newton started to write his story. He used what Larry had given him, fixing it up a bit, and soon had quite a batch of stuff ready to be telegraphed. Larry took it over to the office, and, while he was gone, Mr. Newton continued to write. By the time Larry returned the reporter had another batch ready.

"There," he said as he rubbed his aching fingers, "I guess that will be enough for to-day

unless something breaks loose. Now, after you come back from the office, we'll have dinner."

During the afternoon Mr. Newton and Larry walked about the town. The reporter wanted to familiarize himself with the location of various buildings so if the place was swept away he would be able to write intelligently about it.

Toward evening they paid another visit to the dam. They found a bigger crowd than ever at it, and there was a group of men with lanterns walking about.

"What's going on?" asked Mr. Newton of a man who stood near.

"Going to try dynamite," said the man.

"Not to blow up the dam?"

"Oh, my, no! Going to try and blow a hole in the side of the hill quite a ways up the reservoir to see if they can let some of the water out and relieve the pressure on the dam."

"When will they do that?"

"First thing in the morning."

"That will be more news for us, Larry," spoke Mr. Newton.

"Are you newspaper men?" inquired the man.

"Yes, from the New York *Leader*," replied the reporter and Larry was proud to be in the same class with Mr. Newton, though he knew he had not gotten there yet.

"Well, you'll have plenty of news soon," the man continued.

"How so?"

"Why, the water's risen six inches this afternoon. It's only a foot and a half from the top of the dam now. Then we just got word that a small dam up at a place called Meadeville is liable to burst any minute. It won't do much damage up there, but the water feeds into this reservoir and if it gets here, which it's liable to do to-morrow, why, this whole thing will go."

"I wonder if our hotel's in any danger?" asked the reporter.

"No," replied the man. "That's on high ground, but the part of the town to the west of it is in a very dangerous position, if the dam gives way."

"Well, it's a comfort to know you have a safe place to sleep, at any rate," Mr. Newton remarked, "but I'm sorry for the others."

Larry and his friend spent some more time looking around, and then decided to go back to the hotel. The whole town was full of excitement. Few persons dared go to bed, for fear the calamity would overtake them. They preferred to sit up and wait for it. A large force of men were stationed at the dam to give warning in all directions at the first sign of a break of any kind.

Larry managed to get a few winks of sleep, but he was too anxious about the flood, and also worried about his sister, to rest well. As for Mr.

Newton, nothing seemed to worry him, and he slept as well as though at home.

The rain let up a bit toward morning, but the heavy clouds and the unchanged wind showed that the storm was not over. The first thing after breakfast and getting their mail, including a letter with fair news for Larry, Mr. Newton went out to the dam. The waters had risen slightly, and some engineers who had been summoned said that the pressure on the stone wall was now enormous, and must, unless the flood went down, burst it.

"We'll go and take a look at the place where they're going to dynamite," said Mr. Newton.

They found a corps of men busy. Red flags placed here and there warned the people to keep back from the danger zone. The place where the explosive was going to be set off was near a deep gully, and the men hoped to drive the waters into it and away from the town and dam.

"How soon are they going to set it off?" Mr. Newton asked of a man who had one of the red flags.

"In about an hour," was the reply.

"Then we'll stay and watch it," said Mr. Newton to Larry. "I can send an account of it to the paper. It will make good reading."

The preparations went busily on. It began to rain again, but the men working at the dynamite explosion did not seem to mind it. They were

too interested in the result of the experiment which might mean so much to all of them.

At last those bearing the red flags, at a signal from someone in charge, warned the onlookers farther back.

"I guess it's going off now!" said Mr. Newton. "We'd better get away a bit."

They retreated several hundred feet. While they were wondering whether they were far enough off there came a dull rumble and roar. The ground seemed to tremble and then, as they looked, they saw a mass of earth and rocks rise high in the air.

"There she goes!" exclaimed Larry.

"Now let's see if it does any good," said Mr. Newton.

They looked to see if the big lake of water would become less as a new outlet was provided, but it did not. Either the dynamite had not been placed right, or the men had calculated too much on its power. At any rate, though a big hole was blown in the hill, near the ravine, there was still a large piece of earth between the gully and the imprisoned water. The dynamite had failed to do its work.

"Come on," said Mr. Newton to Larry. "We'll get some stuff off to the paper and then we can come back."

Through the mud and rain they splashed to the hotel. There the reporter wrote up his story and

sent Larry to the telegraph office with it, about a mile and a half away.

"I tell you what it is," said Mr. Newton on Larry's return, "we'll have to get up a new scheme. It takes too long to go from the hotel to the telegraph office. I wonder how we can save time."

"I might run faster," suggested Larry.

"No, you run fast enough now. I'm not finding fault with you."

"I might hire a bicycle."

"How do you mean?"

"Why, I mean I could get a wheel here, and take the copy in on that. I could also get out to the dam, and you could follow. Then you could write the stuff there and I could rush it to the telegraph office right from the scene."

"Good idea!" exclaimed Mr. Newton. "We'll do it. But can you ride a bicycle in this weather?"

"I guess so," said Larry. "I'm pretty good on one. Besides the roads are hard, and the rain hasn't hurt them much."

That afternoon Larry made arrangements to hire a wheel, which he brought around to the hotel. He found that, though it was a trifle awkward to ride it with a rubber coat and big boots on, he could manage, but he did not make as fast time as he would have done otherwise.

"But it's better than walking," said Larry.

That day, and the one which followed, were anxious ones. The water rose steadily, but so slowly that it could scarcely be noticed, on account of being spread over such a large surface. The engineers reported that the strain on the dam was increasing.

Many more people whose houses were nearest to the rising waters began moving out. Appeals for help were sent to nearby towns, and several boats were brought over to be used in case of emergency. Several small gasolene boats also came, and one man offered to bring his steam launch over if the flood continued.

In the meanwhile the people were filled with anxiety. They could do no work, and stood around waiting for what they feared would happen.

Mr. Newton sent off a good account to his paper. That evening he went down to the railroad station. On the last train in came several young men, and a number of boys with them.

"I thought they'd be soon here," said Mr. Newton to Larry.

"Who are they?"

"Reporters from other New York papers. Now we'll have to hustle for beats."

CHAPTER XXXII

THE FLOOD INCREASES

LATE that night, after Larry and Mr. Newton had gone to bed, they were awakened by a noise and excitement in the street. The rain had let up a little, and they got out of bed and went to a window.

"What's the matter?" called Mr. Newton to a man down in the street.

"The dam at Meadeville has burst," was the reply. "Ours will go in about ten hours!"

"That means work for to-morrow," commented the reporter.

"Hadn't we better get out now and see what's going on?" asked Larry.

"No, it wouldn't do any good. There's no immediate danger, or they would have told us. So we might as well stay in bed and rest up. The chances are we'll not get to bed at all to-morrow night."

"Not get to bed?"

"No," replied the reporter. "When you get to be a real newspaper man, Larry, you'll find that your time is the paper's you work for. You

mustn't sleep or be awake except in the interests of the sheet. But when there's nothing doing, get all the rest you can. You'll need it sometimes. Working all night is nothing. That's fun. It's being up six nights out of seven that makes it hard. But we don't have to do that. So go back to bed and sleep as well as you can."

Larry tried to but he found it hard work. He listened to the rain drops and thought of what would happen when the big dam burst. This made him so wide awake that he tried to count the number of drops that fell on a tin roof, thinking the monotony of this might send him to slumber.

Finally, after admiring the calm and peaceful manner in which Mr. Newton dropped off to sleep, Larry found his eyes growing heavy. He began to dream he was swimming in a flood of waters, and trying to climb to the top of a big dam, from which he fell back with a shock that woke him up.

He aroused himself with a suddenness that startled him, to find Mr. Newton shaking him vigorously.

"I didn't mean for you to sleep so sound you couldn't wake up," said the reporter with a smile. "It's time to hustle out and see what's doing, I guess."

"Is it raining yet?" asked Larry.

"Like cats and dogs. We're going to have a

bad day. But never mind. There'll be lots of news."

And news there was in plenty. In anticipation of the danger the people knew would result when the waters from the broken dam at Meadeville reached them, many inhabitants that had not hitherto moved from their houses did so now.

Boats were at a premium, as they were needed to convey the people and their most valued possessions to high ground. There was a range of hills back of the town, and there most of those who left their homes were going.

By reason of its position about half of the town was in danger of inundation should the dam break. It was the people living in that section who were getting out. The others were in comparatively no danger. Some of these latter gave shelter to those who deserted their homes, but as it was the better and wealthier section of Stoneville that was in danger, the inhabitants of the poorer part could not offer much in the way of accommodations.

Some got tents which, in spite of the rain, they erected on the hill tops, and there, with what few things they could take away in boats, they set up camps.

Business was suspended. All the men who could joined in and helped to care for the unfortunates or transport their household goods and valuables. As soon as he had sent off a story

Mr. Newton joined in this work, and Larry helped him.

There were many other reporters on the scene now, and some had brought copy boys or office assistants along to help them. For once in its history Stoneville found itself of much importance to the outside world, for the news of the flood was eagerly read.

When Larry was coming back from the telegraph office with his second batch of copy, pedaling his wheel along the muddy street, he heard a voice call:

"Hello, kid! What you doing here?"

He looked up to behold his old enemy Peter Manton.

"I'm working for Mr. Newton," replied Larry, not feeling any too friendly.

"I'm working too," volunteered Peter, seemingly forgetting that there was an old score between him and Larry. "I'm on the *Scorcher*. I'll bet we beat you fellows all hollow. The *Scorcher* plays up news in red type on the front page. It's a dandy paper."

Larry did not reply, but Peter called after him:

"Where you stopping?"

"At the hotel," replied Larry, not caring to be impolite.

"See you later," called Peter as he kept on toward the telegraph office. "Yes, I'll see you later, and I guess you'll wish you hadn't seen

me," muttered Peter, shaking his fist at Larry's back. If Larry could have seen this he might have worried a little, but, as it was, he did not.

Getting back to the hotel, Larry found the place filled with excited men. They all seemed to be talking at once, but all Larry could distinguish was "dynamite," "blow it up," and "save our lives."

"What's the matter?" he asked of Mr. Newton.

"They are talking of a plan to lower dynamite to the foot of the dam, and blow a big hole in it to relieve the pressure," said the reporter.

"But wouldn't that be as dangerous as if the dam broke of its own weakness?"

"That's what I think, but some of the others seem to believe the hole, if they could make it, would serve as a big outlet."

"What are they going to do about it?"

"Nothing. In the first place they haven't the dynamite, and if they had it, they couldn't get anyone to go out on the dam and lower it, for the thing may give way any minute."

"What makes such a crowd here?"

"A lot more people have deserted their homes, and have come here for shelter."

"Is the danger greater?"

"They say the dam will go in about an hour."

"What are you going to do?"

"I have a plan," said Mr. Newton, "and I want you to help me carry it out."

"What is it?" asked Larry.

"We'll both go out to the dam," said the reporter. "We'll wait there until it gives way, which it must do now in the course of an hour or two. I'll be there and I'll write up a short account. You'll jump on your wheel and hurry to the telegraph office with the copy. We'll get it to the office in time for the last edition and beat all the other papers unless some of them are smart enough to play the same trick, and I don't think they will."

"That's a good idea," commented Larry. "I'll get my wheel ready."

In a little while he and Mr. Newton were starting for the dam. The storm was only a drizzle now, but it was unpleasant enough. Larry thought he would never get dried out again, so long had he been wet through. Mr. Newton said he thought they could both qualify as fishes.

At the dam they found an immense crowd of people. The angry waters were a little higher than before, but were still several inches from the top of the dam. Only the wonderful strength of the masonry saved it. As it was the engineers said there was an indication of a slight crack which, if it increased, would mean that the whole thing would go to pieces.

Raising his umbrella Mr. Newton sat down under it in a place where he could watch developments. He was well out of harm's way in case

the dam should break, and the people, also, kept well back. With pencil and paper ready the reporter waited for what seemed must happen almost any second.

"She's beginning to rise faster!" a man on watch cried. "We're beginning to get some of the water from the broken dam above!"

As he spoke there sounded a dull boom through the vast pile of masonry, that seemed to indicate it was about to give way. The crowd started as though shocked by a current of electricity.

"Is it going?" asked Larry.

"I'm afraid so," said Mr. Newton. "Get ready!"

There was a moment of suspense. The waters swirled and hissed about the solid wall, as though enraged at not being able to batter it down. Then the clouds opened and a flood came out of the sky.

There was a stir in the crowd and several young men came up on the run, heading for the umbrella over Mr. Newton.

"Hello, Harvey!" they shouted. "Anything doing?"

"There will be in a little while," replied Mr. Newton. "Where have you fellows been?"

"Oh, we weren't sent out until yesterday," said one. "They thought this didn't amount to anything."

"I guess they read the *Leader* then, eh?" asked Mr. Newton, with a smile.

"That's right, throw it into us," said several. "But we're here now, and there won't be any more beats."

"That's what you think," said the *Leader* reporter.

"Who are they?" asked Larry in a low tone.

"Men from the other papers," said Mr. Newton. "Look out for them. They may be up to some trick."

There was a sudden movement in the crowd, and from the midst of the people a man emerged. He carried a bundle in his hands, and the men seemed to want to get as far from him as possible.

"I wonder what's going on?" said Larry.

Then a man went past on the run.

"What's up?" asked one of the reporters.

"A fellow has agreed to try and dynamite the dam!" was the answer. "He's going to try and blow a hole in the bottom to let the water out."

"Gee whiz! That'll make a story!" said several.

CHAPTER XXXIII

DYNAMITING THE DAM

THE reporters got out their pencils and paper and began to interview the man. They wanted to know who was going to set off the dynamite, how many pounds he would use, where he got it, how he was going to use it, how he would lower it, and what would happen when he had it in place.

"If you want to know, go ask him," the man exclaimed at length. "I'm not going to stay around here. It's bad enough if the dam breaks, let alone the dynamite going up!"

Then he started off on a run, while the reporters, with the exception of Mr. Newton, stood with pencils poised.

But it seemed that something was going on in the crowd down at the western end of the dam. There were men running to and fro, and preparations seemed to be under way for some undertaking.

As the reporters and others watched they saw a man run out on the broad coping on top of the dam. In his hands he carried a package which

they guessed to be dynamite. He seemed to have no fear of the deep waters on one side of him or the big gully on the other, to which he might fall and be dashed to death on the rocks.

With a long rope, around which was a fuse, he lowered the explosive to the bottom of the big wall of masonry. The idea was to blow a hole in the rocks under it, and not to injure the dam itself, but to make a place where the water could escape, in addition to the regular exits. It was a task of peril and few would have liked to undertake it.

The crowd almost in breathless silence watched the man lower the powerful explosive to the bottom of the wall inch by inch. He seemed like a fly out there on the narrow coping of the dam, and likely to be swept to his death any minute.

Mr. Newton, who had learned the brave man's name from a bystander, was busy writing a story about him which he intended to send to the paper. He was on a little hill where he could have a good view of the operation and yet be out of danger.

Suddenly the man raised his hand. It was a signal that the dynamite was in place and that he was about to touch off the fuse. Hundreds ran back, for, though they were in no danger, they imagined they were.

The man was seen to stoop over and strike a match. A little puff of smoke arose. The crowd watched to see him run back and regain solid

ground. But, as it happened, the first match went out. He had to light another. This time he managed to kindle the fuse. A little puff of smoke arose on the damp air. The rain came down harder.

"It may put the fuse out," said Mr. Newton.

The man was bending over, watching it. He seemed to be fanning the fuse to a blaze. Then, all at once, he started on a run toward shore.

"I guess he's lighted it," observed Mr. Newton, looking at his watch.

There were several anxious minutes of waiting. A thin wreath of smoke arose from the fuse. The other reporters were scribbling away.

Suddenly a dull boom sounded. A cloud of rocks and dirt arose from the bottom of the dam. The waters in the reservoir seemed tremendously agitated.

"There's a hole in the dam!" cried several.

"No, there isn't!" said Mr. Newton to Larry. "Here! Take this copy. It's another failure! I've wired 'em to hold back for an extra. The dam is liable to go any second now. The explosion only weakened it along the whole length. Hurry back, Larry."

He gave the boy a bundle of copy and Larry, jumping on his wheel, pedaled off as fast as he could. Several of the other reporters, who had not thought to provide messengers, started for the telegraph office on the run.

"You're a foxy one, Newton," they said. "But you wait! We'll beat you yet."

"You're welcome to try," was Mr. Newton's answer.

Larry was making good time, in spite of the rain-soaked roads. He reached the telegraph office some minutes in advance of the other reporters, and, as the rule is in regard to press dispatches, the first to come is the first to be served, Mr. Newton's stuff went over the wire ahead of the other dispatches.

"I can't promise to send much more," said the operator, as several of the reporters came into the office. "Just got word that the waters just above here are worse than ever. Guess I'll have to vacate here soon."

"Where will you go?" asked Larry.

"I'll take some of the instruments and set up a temporary office on the high hill back of the town," was the answer. "The water can't get there, and if you'll get a boat you may be able to bring me your copy."

"I'll get a boat," said Larry, with a laugh. "But perhaps it will not be as bad as you think."

"It will be worse," replied the operator, clicking away at his key.

Larry started back to where Mr. Newton was. On the way he met Peter Manton, his old rival, bringing some copy from the reporter for whom he was working.

"You think you're smart with your wheel," said Peter. "But you can't use it much longer. The dam is breaking and you will have to swim."

At this news, that the dam was about to give way, Larry put on extra speed. He wanted to be back in time to get some more copy from Mr. Newton, who, he knew, would want to send word for the extra.

As he sped along, and hard enough going it was, he heard a dull boom over toward the dam. This was followed by excited shouts. Then came a subdued roar.

"The dam has gone!" Larry exclaimed.

An instant later he saw a number of people running toward him, and he came to a halt.

"I guess I can't get down there," thought the boy. "I wonder where Mr. Newton is?"

At that moment he saw the reporter coming toward him on the run.

"Go back! Go back!" cried Mr. Newton. "The waters are rising fast!"

"Did the dam break?" asked Larry, wanting to make sure.

"Of course. A big hole right in the middle. Fortunately a part of it held, or the flood would be so sudden that we would have had trouble in getting away. But come on."

"Where are we going?" asked Larry.

"Back to the hotel," replied Mr. Newton.

"We'll be safe there. I want to get a line off to the paper."

"You'll have to hurry," said the boy. "The telegraph operator said if the dam broke he'd have to leave."

"Wait, and I'll scribble a line now," said the reporter. He hastily wrote something on a piece of paper, addressed it to the *Leader*, and gave it to Larry.

"Take it on a jump now, Larry, my boy!" he cried, and Larry rushed off on his wheel. "I'll meet you at the hotel," called Mr. Newton after him.

Larry reached the telegraph office just as the operator was leaving it.

"Wait a minute!" called the boy. "I have some copy for you."

"Can't wait!" exclaimed the telegraph man. "The water's rising and I'm going to get out while there's time."

"This will only take you a second," said Larry. "It's got to get to the *Leader*. It tells about the dam breaking. They're going to get out an extra!"

"Well, I wouldn't do it for anyone else," said the operator, "but you're a plucky boy to come here with the copy when everyone else is thinking of getting away, so I'll send the dispatch for you. After this you may find me in a temporary office in a tent up on the hill."

"I'm much obliged to you," said Larry, handing over the copy. He waited until he saw the operator send it off, and then the man, taking some of his instruments with him, left the office.

As he did so a small stream of water began to run down the middle of the street.

"Flood's coming!" exclaimed the telegrapher. "You were just in time!"

Then he began to run, and Larry, abandoning his wheel, did likewise, for he knew because of the formation of the ground that there might be deep water there soon.

The rain had stopped once more, and this time it seemed as if it might let up for some time, as the clouds grew lighter. But that was too late to prevent the damage by the rising waters, which continued to increase in depth. Fortunately most of the people in that section of the town had been given plenty of warning and had left their homes, taking all their most valued possessions with them.

However, there were some who lingered too late, and they were now fleeing with only a few necessaries. They made for the other side of the place, where the high ground around the hotel offered a chance for safety.

Larry and the operator hurried along, the former aiming to reach the hotel, and the telegrapher to make arrangements to set up a temporary office. At the hotel Larry found Mr.

Newton, surrounded by a number of newspaper men, waiting for him.

"Did you make it?" asked Mr. Newton.

"Just in time. It was the last message?" said the boy.

"What's that, Newton?" asked some of his acquaintances.

"I just sent a wire about the dam bursting," was the answer.

"You don't mean you've got another beat on us?"

"Well, I guess Larry did the biggest part of it," replied Mr. Newton.

"Well, you two are a great team," said some of the other reporters, disgusted at being beaten again.

CHAPTER XXXIV

UNDER WATER

The town was now a scene of wild confusion. The people were nearly out of their senses with fear, for they were alarmed lest the waters reach even the high places. Cooler heads did their best to quiet the excited ones, but it was hard work.

Boats were plying everywhere, taking people from the second stories of their houses in some cases, and saving some from possible death by drowning. The waters, which were now turned into a raging torrent, were filled with débris brought down from up country.

Sometimes whole houses or barns would be borne along, and when they struck a building in Stoneville there was a crash that could be heard for some distance and the stationary residence would be knocked from its foundation and carried away.

The houses of those whom the flood had not reached were thrown open to the unfortunates. The hotel took in all it could hold, but the proprietor was obliged to put everyone on short rations, for food was getting scarce, and the rail-

road was under water, so no more could be brought in that way.

There was plenty of material for newspaper copy now. The reporters, Mr. Newton included, went out on a tour of investigation, making notes of what they saw. The men who worked on morning papers were in a quandary how to get their news off until someone said there was a telegraph office in the next town, about five miles away over the hills.

Several of them clubbed together, hired a horse and carriage, and drove over with their copy.

"I wonder if I'll have to do that in the morning," Mr. Newton said to Larry.

"I think I have a better plan," said the boy.

"What is it?"

Then Larry told of how the Stoneville operator was going to open a temporary office on the hill in a tent.

"If he does that, in time for us, it will be just the thing," said Mr. Newton. "Keep quiet concerning it. Don't say anything about it to the other fellows."

"Why not?"

"Because we don't want them to know it. If they find it out they'll go there and file stuff, and ours may be delayed. You must learn, in the newspaper business, to know everything and tell nothing, especially to the fellow on the other paper."

"I'll go over the first thing in the morning and find out if he's opened his place," said Larry.

That night was one of terror. Fortunately there was enough warning about the bursting of the dam so that most of the people were out of the way in time, and none was killed. But the property loss was tremendous. About midnight the waters ceased to rise, but they still inundated most of the town, and would for some time, since the country for quite a distance above was covered with the flood.

Early the next morning Larry got up, dressed, and went downstairs. He was surprised to find the corridor of the hotel partly filled with water.

"What's the matter?" he asked the clerk.

"Oh, they tried to drown us out last night," was the reply.

"Has the flood reached here?" asked the boy.

"Take a look out front and you'll think so," the man went on.

Larry looked from the windows. He saw that the street was inundated, the water being about four feet deep.

"How am I going to get out?" he asked in dismay.

"Swim," said the clerk with a laugh, in spite of the gravity of the situation. "It's not very cold. Or you might wait for the flood to go down."

"I haven't time for that," said Larry, "and I

don't believe I could swim as far as I intend to go."

"There are some fellows outside with boats, and they may take you where you want to go," the clerk said.

"That's a good idea," said the boy. "I'll try it."

He went out on the front steps, through the corridor, which contained about an inch of water. As he reached the front door a rowboat, propelled by a big man, shot up.

"Boat?" asked the man, in the manner of one inquiring whether one would have a cab. "Take you anywhere for half a dollar."

Larry mentioned where he wanted to be landed, and got in the boat. The oarsman said he would take him as near the place on the hill as he could go.

"You'll have to walk the rest of the way," the improvised ferryman said.

"I'm willing," replied the boy.

He found that the operator had set up a small tent, and was busy over his instruments, which he had attached to the telegraph line that passed over the brow of the hill.

"How soon can you take messages?" asked Larry.

"Oh, it's you, eh?" asked the operator. "You were my last customer in the old place, and you're the first one in the new."

"Will you soon be ready?" asked Larry.

"In about an hour," was the reply.

The man busied himself over his instruments, connecting them to batteries he had procured and then adjusting them. Next he climbed a telegraph pole and "cut in" as it is called on the main line, fastening the wire from his machines to the regular line. Larry watched him with interest.

"I'll soon be ready for you," said the man.

"Then I'll go back and get some copy," said Larry.

He went down to the boat which was waiting for him, and in a little while found himself back at the hotel. By this time nearly all the guests were up and the women, especially, were much frightened when they saw that the place was in the middle of a miniature lake, and that there was water in the corridor.

"Don't be alarmed," the clerk was saying. "The water is not rising, and, though it will probably stay here for some time, there is no danger. We'll make you as comfortable as we can, but you can't expect many comforts."

"Have the fires gone out?" asked one man. "My room is cold."

"The water has put the fire out in the furnace down in the cellar," was the reply, "but we've sent for oil stoves, and we'll be able to give you a little heat."

The clerk's assurances did much to quiet the

excited throng, and then breakfast was announced, though it was not a very liberal meal. However, there was plenty of good hot coffee and bread and butter.

"Where have you been?" asked Mr. Newton of Larry.

"Looking for a telegraph office," replied the boy in a low tone, for there were other newspaper men near by.

"Did you find one?"

"I did," and then Larry whispered that the man would take messages soon. "Get some stuff ready," he went on, "and I'll take it to him before the other fellows locate him."

"Good idea," said Mr. Newton. "I'll have a bunch of copy ready in about an hour."

He hurried through the meal and went over to a table, where he began writing at a rapid rate.

"How you going to get your stuff off?" asked some of the other reporters.

"That's a secret," replied Mr. Newton good-naturedly as he went on describing in vigorous language the scenes in the flooded district, for much more of the town was under water than had been expected would be covered.

All about were men plying here and there in boats, saving household goods, carrying people hither and yon, and taking provisions from the centers where food had been collected to the different places where the people were congregated.

There were one or two naphtha launches, and any number of rowboats.

Altogether it made a lively and unusual story. Fortunately there was no loss of life, though there were many narrow escapes. Many head of stock, and hundreds of horses and pigs in the country section had been drowned.

The breaking of the dam Mr. Newton described more fully than in his first hasty dispatch, and putting in many exciting incidents he had a story that he felt sure would be read with interest when it was printed in the *Leader*.

"Now to get it on the wire ahead of the other fellows," he remarked to himself, as he folded up the copy and gave it to Larry.

"Now don't let any of the others find out where you are going," cautioned Mr. Newton to the boy. "Try and fool them. Have the man row you in a different direction, and then circle about and get to the telegraph tent. Do you think you can do it?"

"I guess so," replied Larry. "I don't believe the other reporters know where the tent is. You can't see it from the hotel, and they haven't gone out very far."

"All right," replied Mr. Newton. "Come back as soon as you can. Here is some money to pay the boatman with."

Larry had donned his rubber boots, but, as it was not raining, he had no need to hoist his um-

brella. It seemed at last that the storm had ceased, though the waters had not yet begun to recede.

Larry walked through the damp corridor, trying not to seem in a hurry or as if he was going anywhere. He thought he had succeeded, but, just as he was about to get into the same boat he had hired before, he saw Peter Manton come hurrying out. Peter had a bundle of copy in his hand, and was, evidently, going to look for a telegraph office. He glared at Larry.

"Here's where we beat you," sneered Peter.

Larry wondered whether Peter had discovered where the telegraph office was. If he knew, Larry thought there would be no use in trying to fool him by taking a round-about course. If he did not, then there was a chance of Larry reaching it first and getting Mr. Newton's copy on the wire.

"Row me to the telegraph office," was the order Larry heard Peter give to a boatman he had engaged.

"I don't know where there is one," the man said.

"Well, row about until you find one," said Peter, with as much airs as though he was a reporter instead of a copy boy. "When you find it I'll send this stuff."

The man started off, rowing at random. Larry waited a while, and then, telling his boat-

man to send the craft in the opposite direction from that in which the telegraph tent was, he too started away.

"We mustn't let them find out where we're going," said Larry. "I must get to the office first."

CHAPTER XXXV

THE RACE

In a little while the boat containing Peter was out of sight around the corner of the street. Larry thought it would be a good time to start in the right direction toward the telegraph office. Accordingly he told the man at the oars to head the craft the other way.

"I'll bet they're up to some trick," the man said. "The fellow rowing that boat is a foxy chap. I think he suspects something."

"Well, we'll give him a race if we have to," replied Larry.

If Larry had not been so intent on his errand he would have been interested in the strange sights all about him. The flooded city was alive with boats rowed or being propelled in all directions.

The people seemed to have gotten over their first fear, and, though there was much discomfort, they were making the best of circumstances. A large number of houses were under water to the second stories, and the families were living on the

upper floors. A corps of men brought them food and supplies.

Fortunately the weather was mild for November, and there was little real suffering. There was not much food, but, now that the waters had ceased rising, trains were being sent over the railroad bearing goods of various sorts for the relief of the homeless ones.

On and on Larry's boatman rowed him. It was quite a distance to the foot of the hill on which the telegraph tent was located, and progress was slow while they were threading their way in and out among the inundated streets. Care had to be taken, also, not to be struck with the floating débris that was swirling along on the current.

"Look behind you," said the boatman suddenly to Larry, who was in the stern, facing the oarsman. The boy turned.

There, coming after them, as fast as the man could bend to the sweeps, was the boat containing Peter. The craft was forging through the water at a rapid pace and would be up to them in a short time.

"They're following us!" exclaimed Larry's rower.

"I guess they've found out where the telegraph office is," said Larry, "and they're going to try and get there first."

"Then it's to be a race," replied Tony, Larry's man. "Well, Jim Dexter will find I'm as good a

hand at the oars as he is!" With this Tony braced himself and began taking long strokes that sent the boat through the water at a good clip.

"Mind where you steer now," cautioned Tony to Larry. "Don't run us on a log or a floating house and I'll get you to the telegraph place first."

"I hope you do," replied Larry, as he took a firm grasp of the rudder. "If the *Scorcher* beats the *Leader* I'm liable to lose my job, and so is Mr. Newton."

The other boat was almost up to them now. Larry could hear Peter urging Jim to greater exertion as the boy sat in the sternsheets and steered, as Larry was doing.

"Ten dollars if you beat 'em!" Peter exclaimed as his boat crept up inch by inch, until it was almost even with Larry's craft.

"I don't need any ten dollars to beat him," said Tony, with a nod at Jim. "He and I aren't any too friendly and I'd like to wallop him, just for the looks of the thing, to say nothing of helping you out."

"Thanks," spoke Larry. "I haven't ten dollars to offer you, but I've no doubt Mr. Newton will pay you well if you get me to the telegraph office first."

The race was now on in earnest. The boats were side by side, and not far apart. Both were headed for the hill, on the summit of which could be seen the white tent where the telegraph office

was located. Peter had played a trick on Larry, by pretending to be hunting for the place. As a matter of fact he merely had Jim row about until they saw in which direction Larry's boat went. Then he followed.

They were now pretty well clear of the town, and were going over flooded fields. The water was filled with logs and stumps of trees, planks, pits of barnyard wreckage, and occasionally the dead body of a horse or cow. It required careful steerage to avoid hitting these objects, and in consequence the speed was not as great as it might otherwise have been.

The two men, who were old-time rivals, bent to the oars until the stout ash handles almost broke. The blades swirled through the water and the bows made ripples and foam as both craft forged ahead.

For a while the two boats were almost on even terms. They raced along not ten feet apart, and so nearly alike did Jim and Tony row that it looked as if the two were but one craft. But, little by little Tony began to pull ahead. He put a little more force into his strokes and took longer ones, while Jim was rowing in a rather ragged fashion.

Once Jim caught a "crab," and nearly went overboard. This gave Tony a big advantage, and he got almost a length ahead. However, he lost this lead in a little while, for Larry, by some mis-

chance, hit a log a glancing blow and Tony had to stop rowing in order not to upset.

"Be careful," cautioned Tony. "Another one like that and we'll lose the race."

"I'll be careful," replied Larry, ashamed of his error.

Once again the two boats were about in line. The rowers were tiring, however, and could not go so fast. Tony, who was an old hand at the oars, stuck to his task with grim determination, and soon he was half a length ahead of his rival.

By this time a crowd of people on the shore, which they were fast approaching, were aware that something unusual was under way. They came down close to the water's edge to see the outcome of the race. The boats were now a little over a quarter of a mile away from the land.

"They're beating us!" exclaimed Peter, as he saw Larry's boat pulling steadily ahead. "Can't you row faster, Jim?"

"I'm doing the best I can," was the reply, but Jim gritted his teeth and tried to get a little more power out of his strokes. It was seemingly useless, however, for Tony with the regularity of clockwork was sending his boat through the water at a good clip.

"I can't let him beat me!" exclaimed Peter, while an ugly look stole over his face. "If I don't get my copy there first I'll be discharged. I've got to beat him, by fair means or foul."

The distance between the boats was fast widening. Larry's was three-quarters of a length ahead now.

"I've got to do it!" exclaimed Peter in a low tone.

Then, with a sudden yank on the tiller ropes, he shifted the rudder so that the bow of his boat was pointed straight at Larry's craft.

"Look out!" cried Tony, who saw the movement. "You'll upset us!"

Larry, hearing the shout, turned to see Peter's boat racing toward him. He tried to steer out of the way, but there was no chance. An instant later the two boats came together with a crash. The gunwale of Larry's boat was cracked, and the force of the impact was so heavy that his craft careened until the water came over the other rail.

"We're upsetting!" cried Tony, throwing himself to one side in an endeavor to prevent what seemed certain to happen.

Nor could he avoid it, for a second later the boat turned turtle, throwing the two occupants into the water.

"You did that on purpose!" cried Tony, as he began to strike out vigorously toward Peter's boat.

"It was an accident!" cried Peter, somewhat alarmed at the outcome of his mean trick.

"Can you swim?" asked Tony of Larry, who had sunk once, but who soon bobbed up again.

"Yes—I—can!" gasped the boy. "I had—to —kick—my—rubber—boots—off—though!"

They both struck out for Peter's boat, expecting that the occupants would stop and assist them. But this was not Peter's idea. Jim would have stopped rowing and gone to the rescue of those in the water, but Peter steered the boat to one side and the momentum carried it a considerable distance away.

"Aren't you going to help them?" asked Jim.

"No!" snapped Peter. "You keep on rowing. We must get to the telegraph office first! I've got to beat them!"

"But they may drown!"

"No danger. They can both swim, and they can cling to their boat until we come back. Someone will come out from shore for them. See, some boats are starting already."

This was so, several small craft putting out as soon as those on shore saw the accident happen.

"Now you row on!" commanded Peter. "I hired you to take me to the telegraph office and we haven't time to stop and rescue people."

"Well, of all the mean—" began Jim, and then he stopped. He realized that Larry and Tony were in no particular danger, but he felt that they should be taken into his boat. However, he wanted to earn the ten dollars Peter had promised him.

"Are you going to leave us?" called Tony.

"It ain't my doings," called back Jim. "He won't let me stop."

"Then he'll get his stuff to the telegraph office first," said Larry. "He'll beat me!"

He and Tony were clinging to the keel of their overturned boat.

"Maybe we can get this right side up and catch them," suggested Tony.

"No, it's too late," said Larry sorrowfully. "They have too much of a start."

It seemed so, for Peter's boat was now about a quarter of a mile from shore, and Jim was rowing fast.

"Shall we swim in or wait until someone comes out and picks us up?" asked Tony.

"Might as well stay here," replied Larry. "It's hard swimming in your clothes."

His heart was full of bitterness, both at the mean trick Peter had played, and at the thought of being beaten, for he knew that there would not be time for the telegraph operator to send both Peter's copy and his also in time for the afternoon paper. The *Leader* would be beaten.

"Hark! What's that?" asked Tony, as they moved about to get better positions in grasping the overturned boat.

"Sounded like a whistle," said Larry.

"It was a whistle! A motor boat is coming toward us!" cried Tony.

CHAPTER XXXVI

LARRY SCORES A BIG BEAT

LARRY looked up. There, bearing down on them, was a swift gasolene launch, one of several that had been doing rescue work about the flooded town. The man at the wheel had her headed for the upset rowboat.

"They're going to pick us up!" cried Tony.

"But it will be too late," said Larry.

"Maybe not, that's a powerful craft, and maybe they'll get you to shore ahead of that little skunk!" spoke Tony.

"Stand by to be taken off!" cried the captain of the motor boat.

With a graceful curve the craft swung up to where Larry and Tony clung to the keel of their boat. The man at the wheel pulled a lever and the screw reversed, though the engines did not stop. The motor boat slowed up, and, as it slowly passed by, the two in the water grasped the gunwale, which was low, and pulled themselves aboard, before the craft had come to a stop.

"Saw you upset," said the motor boat's captain, "and I headed right for you."

"We didn't upset, we were run down," said Tony, "and there goes the mean chap that did it," he added, pointing to Peter's boat.

"Can you put us ashore in a hurry?" asked Larry. "I must get some press dispatches to the telegraph office. I want to beat the boy in that boat. We were beating him, but he ran his boat into ours and upset us. Then he wouldn't stop to pick us up."

"So you want to get ashore first, eh?" asked the owner of the motor craft. "What paper are you from?"

"I'm with Mr. Newton of the *Leader*," said Larry.

"What, Harvey Newton?" asked the man.

"Yes," said Larry.

"Well, I'd do a good bit for Harvey Newton," the captain went on. "He was at our motor boat races in New York bay last summer, and I found him a good friend."

"Do you think you can get me ashore first?" asked Larry.

"Well, he's got a pretty good start," said the captain, "but I never saw anything that could beat the *Porpoise* if you gave her half a show. We'll see what we can do. Can you steer while I attend to the engines?"

"I guess so," replied Larry.

"Better let me," put in Tony. "I know the lay of the land better than you do."

"Go ahead then," said the captain. "I'll speed her up for all she's worth."

He went back to the stern. The steady chug-chug of the motor, which had not ceased, was now increased threefold as the captain shifted various levers, let more gasolene into the cylinders and advanced the spark. Then, with Tony at the wheel, the *Porpoise* shot ahead, in an attempt to beat Peter to the shore.

How the swift craft cut through the water! A big wave arose on either side of the bow. The motors were exploding like a battery of gatling guns as the captain, in the rôle of engineer, opened the exhaust to clean out the cylinders. Then, shutting it down, the engine throbbed like a big turbine wheel under heavy pressure.

Nearer and nearer to the shore the craft forged. Peter, looking back, saw that Larry and Tony had been rescued and, in the fast boat, were bearing down on him.

"Row! Row!" he cried to Jim. "They're going to run us down!"

"Don't worry, they're not as mean as you are," said Jim.

"Then they'll beat us ashore!" yelled Peter.

"I shouldn't wonder if they did," was Jim's cool reply. "I'm doing my best, but I can't beat the *Porpoise*. She's the fastest boat around here."

Peter's craft was now about three hundred feet

from the shore. There was a big crowd waiting to see the outcome of the affair.

On came the *Porpoise*, going like a race horse. Larry stood behind Tony, who grasped the spokes of the steering wheel with a firm grip, and kept the craft in a straight course.

"Will we beat 'em?" asked Larry in a strained voice.

"I don't know! I hope so," said Tony as he shook his head to get the water, that was dripping from his hair, out of his eyes.

The engines seemed to increase their speed. They throbbed like the heart of an athlete at the end of a two-mile run. Then, as the muffler was cut out, the explosions came with deafening power.

Closer and closer to the rowboat came the motor craft. Jim was pulling with all his strength at the oars. Now his boat was but a hundred feet from shore. But, like an eagle swooping down, the *Porpoise* was after him.

"Get ready to jump!" called the captain. "Put her broadside to the shore," he added to Tony. "We can't stop without ramming the mud unless you do."

"Aye, aye, sir!" called Tony tersely.

Then, in a smother of foam, and passing so close that the wash rocked, and nearly upset the rowboat, the motor craft passed her, and shot up along shore.

The captain reversed the screw, and the blades churned up the water until it seemed that a small volcano was beneath the waves.

"Jump and run for it!" the owner of the *Porpoise* called to Larry.

The boy needed no second bidding. Over the side he went, while the craft was still moving at good speed. He jumped into about two feet of water and then, reaching into his pocket to see if his precious copy was safe, he started on a run up the hill toward the telegraph office. The crowd set up a cheer, though they did not know what for, except that there had been a race and someone had won.

The waves created by the passage of the *Porpoise* prevented Jim from rowing steadily, and it was several minutes later before he was able to land Peter. The boy jumped ashore and started to run after Larry.

"Here!" cried Jim, catching hold of him. "Where's my ten dollars?"

"Pay you when I come back," said Peter.

"You'll pay me now," said Jim, taking a firm grip on the boy's shoulder. "I've earned my money and I want it."

"There you go!" exclaimed Peter, throwing down a bill and wrenching himself free. Then he started up the hill after his rival.

But Larry had too good a start to be beaten now. Straight toward the tent he dashed, giv-

ing but one glance behind to see that Peter was far in the rear. All he needed to do, he knew, was to get his copy into the hands of the operator first. The rule of precedence would then prevail.

"There!" gasped Larry, a few minutes later, as, panting from his run, he dashed into the tent. "There's some copy. Rush it!"

"Looks as if you'd been rushing it," commented the man, with a glance at Larry. "Why, what in the world is the matter with it? It's all wet."

"I fell overboard," said Larry. "But you can read it, can't you?"

"I reckon so. Lucky it's in pencil instead of ink. If it was ink, it would have run in the water."

Fortunately Mr. Newton had used tough and heavy paper to write on, and Larry had folded the copy tightly and placed it inside a leather pocketbook, so that, though the sheets were pretty damp, their short immersion in the water had not harmed them.

Three minutes after Larry had "filed" his copy Peter came dashing in. He flung down a package of paper.

"Here! Get that right on the wire!" he ordered in an insolent tone.

"You'll have to wait," said the operator coolly. "This gentleman had his in ahead of you, and the rule here is 'first come first served.'"

"I'll give you five dollars if you send mine first," said Peter.

"Look here, you little whipper-snapper!" the operator exclaimed. "I want you to understand you can't bribe me. I wouldn't send yours first for fifty dollars. Now you get out of this tent. You can leave your copy, and I'll send it after I get this batch off. But the *Leader* stuff goes first!"

Peter, with an angry glance at Larry, slunk out.

"I'd like to give him a good switching," muttered the operator, as he began to work his telegraph instruments preparatory to getting Larry's copy off. "The idea of trying to bribe me!"

Larry, after seeing that Mr. Newton's story was safe, turned to go back.

"What's your hurry?" asked the operator. "Tell me what happened. I'll have to wait a little while until I get a clear wire."

Then Larry related the story of the race with Peter, and told of the latter's mean trick.

"Well, I'm mighty glad you beat him," said the operator. "This story will set New York by the ears, and your paper will be the only one to get it. All the wires are down but mine, and it will take me nearly all the morning to get this stuff off. That will make it too late for any of the *Scorcher's* copy to get to the office in time for to-day. You'll score a big beat all right."

And so Larry did. He did not learn of it until some days later, however, as they did not hear from the *Leader* office until that time, because of the difficulty in getting messages and mail through.

That night, in their room at the hotel, Larry told Mr. Newton the story of the race.

"You're too modest," the reporter declared. "I heard all about it from my friend of the *Porpoise*. If this don't result in something nice for you when we get back I'll miss my guess. By the way, there's a letter for you."

"I hope it's from mother," exclaimed Larry. "She hasn't written in two days."

It was a letter from home, and contained good news, for it said that Lucy was doing finely, and the doctor expected she would soon be well and able to walk.

"Hurrah!" cried Larry. "This is better than getting a beat!"

"They're both good," said Mr. Newton, smiling.

CHAPTER XXXVII

LARRY'S ADVANCEMENT

ALMOST as rapidly as it had risen the flood went down. The storm ceased and the waters, finding many places to run to, soon disposed of themselves. The day after Larry won the race that was to mean so much to him the part of the town around the hotel was almost free from the flood.

"The worst is over," said Mr. Newton. "We'll be going back home soon."

"We can't go any too soon to suit me," said Larry. "I want to see my mother and Lucy and the others."

"I don't blame you," spoke the reporter. "I'll be glad to get back to New York myself."

They remained in Stoneville two days longer, and each day Mr. Newton sent a graphic story of the flood. The townspeople were returning to the homes they had deserted. Much damage had been done, but help came pouring in from every side.

Trains began to run, and the mails, that had been interrupted, resumed their service. Larry

and Mr. Newton received several copies of the *Leader*, containing the story which Larry had so successfully raced to get to the telegraph office. Copies of other New York papers, of the same date were also received, but none of them had more than a few lines about the flood and burst dam, while the *Leader's* story covered a whole page under big headlines.

On the evening of the second day, after the big beat, Mr. Newton received a telegram from Mr. Emberg. It read:

"Congratulations to you and Larry. Come home. Associated press will cover remainder of the story."

"Get ready!" exclaimed Mr. Newton to Larry. "We're going home to-morrow!"

Several of the other special correspondents had already left Stoneville. Some accompanied Mr. Newton and Larry the next morning.

"Well, you put it all over us," said one of them to the *Leader* reporter.

"With Larry's help I did," replied Mr. Newton. "If I hadn't had him along, I never could have done it."

"Larry's all right," was the immediate and hearty response.

Larry thought he had never been on a train that moved so slowly. It seemed to crawl along.

A flying machine would have been too slow for him, so eager was he to get home.

But at last he arrived in New York. It seemed good to get away from the sight of dirty brown water, sorrowful people, and the constant rain that had been his portion for a week.

"I'll see you at the office in the morning," said Mr. Newton. "Good-night."

"Good-night," called Larry as he ran after a car.

He reached home. Into the house he burst with:

"Here I am, mother! How are you? How's Lucy? How are Mary and Jimmy?"

"Oh, Larry, Larry!" exclaimed his mother, throwing her arms around him.

Mary and Jimmy crowded around their brother, clamoring for kisses, while Jimmy wanted to hear all about the flood.

"How's Lucy?" asked Larry again, as soon as he could quiet the youngster.

"Doing finely," replied the nurse, coming into the room. "We have a surprise for you."

"What is it?" asked Larry.

"Come and show him, Lucy," said the nurse.

Then, from her room, came the girl. Not as she had used to walk, hobbling along like a cripple, but straight and upright. With firm, though slow step, she approached her brother.

"Lucy! Lucy!" cried Larry.

"Oh, Larry!" the girl exclaimed. "Aren't you glad? I'm well again! I can walk like other girls! Soon I'll be able to run!"

"Really?" asked Larry, hardly able to believe the good news, and trying hard to keep back the tears.

"Yes," the nurse said. "She did much better than we expected. Dr. Carrolton took the plaster cast off three days ago, but we didn't send you any word, for fear of a disappointment. Lucy is entirely cured."

There was a happy household in the Dexter apartment that night. Several neighbors, who had heard the good news, called, and there was general rejoicing that the sick girl was well.

"Now tell us all about yourself," said Mrs. Dexter to Larry. "Your letters were only notes."

"I didn't have time to write much," the boy said.

Then he told them the main things that had occurred since he had been away.

"We read all about it in the paper," said Lucy. "I was proud of you, Larry."

Larry reached the office early the next morning. He found Mr. Newton at his desk.

"Want to go off on some more assignments?" asked the reporter.

"I shouldn't mind," replied Larry with a smile.

One by one the other reporters came in. They

laughed and joked with Mr. Newton. Some of them talked with Larry.

"Gee! But you had a swell time," said Bud, gazing at Larry with envious eyes.

Mr. Emberg was a little late that morning, and none of the reporters went out until he came in. When he did arrive he nodded a greeting to all in general.

"Glad to see you, Newton," the city editor said. "Get back all right?"

"Yes, sir."

"You and Larry did good work. Where's Larry?"

"Here," replied the copy boy.

"Oh!" said Mr. Emberg, with a queer little smile playing over his features. Then, taking Larry by the hand, the city editor said:

"Gentlemen of the staff of the *Leader*, let me introduce you to our latest member, Mr. Larry Dexter."

For a moment there was a silence. Larry looked all around on a circle of smiling faces.

"What does it mean?" he asked of the city editor.

"It means that from now on you're a regular reporter on this paper," replied Mr. Emberg. "We're proud of you, Larry, and this is the only way we can show it. You've earned your advance if anyone ever did. The work you did at the flood, particularly in scoring the big beat, and

the other things you've done, prove that you are a real newspaper man, which is a rare sort of an individual. Let me congratulate you."

He shook hands with Larry, who was blushing like a girl.

And that was how Larry Dexter rose from a copy boy to be a regular reporter. Of his further adventures, and he had many, you may read in the next volume of this series which will be called "Larry Dexter, Reporter; Or, Strange Adventures in a Great City." There will be told of how he went on in his chosen field, and how he made a name and fame for himself and his paper, and also of how he again brought to light the old deed for land in the Bronx and found it of great value.

"Let's all shake hands with Larry," called one of the reporters, and they filed up and gave their best wishes to the former copy boy.

And here we will leave Larry for the present, wishing him well.

THE END

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